From the pages of THE SANDMAN

Lucifer

BOOK THREE

"A work of genius in the dark fantasy genre."
— Comics International

Mike Carey

Peter Gross
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Dean Ormston
Craig Hamilton
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VERTIGO

LUCIFER BOOK THREE

Lucifer

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LUCIFER BOOK THREE

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REST IN PEACE
ELAINE

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THE FATHER OF LIES

This third volume of the collected LUCIFER opens with issue 29 — midway through our third year, with a lot of story already told, a lot of characters moving on different (intersecting) trajectories and the groundwork laid for a lot of important revelations. We had a sense of gathering momentum and the confidence (maybe a little reckless, but, as it turned out, well placed) that we'd be able to finish the story exactly as we wanted to, at our own pace and to our own agenda.

The first order of business was to finish out the trilogy of interlinked tales that had begun with "Paradiso" and "Purgatorio." In "Inferno," Lucifer returns to Hell to keep the promise he made a year before — to fight a duel to the death with the angel Amenadiel. Unfortunately, he didn't anticipate when he made that promise that in the meantime he'd have his power and his immortality stolen from him through the machinations of the goddess Izanami. He's going naked into the conference chambers of the eternal realms — ultimately because he'd rather do that than break his word.

Promises are very central to this book. The swearing of oaths and the need to make good on them was a theme we kept coming back to. Sometimes it seemed as though our whole cast could be divided into the characters who were prepared to do anything — up to and including murder and self-immolation — to keep their word and those who, for whatever good or bad or equivocal reason, broke it.

Lucifer always fell into the first of those categories for us, and it was central to how we saw him. It's fair to say, however, that his honesty is a complicated artefact. On the face of it, it's a part of his massive arrogance and touchy pride. Lying, as David Easterman says when he first meets Lucifer, is a little bit demeaning — shaming, even. It makes you contingent to and lesser than the person you're lying to, which isn't something Lucifer would like at all.

But look a little harder at Lucifer's honesty and you start to see deeper and darker levels to it. The truth, in Lucifer's hands, is weaponized. He tells the truths that will get the job done, selecting them with absolute ruthlessness and fine discrimination. If he's talking to you, you're in trouble — all the more so since everything he says will stand up to the most rigorous examination. You won't find a hole in Lucifer's pitch. It will find a hole in you — as Easterman found to his cost in the "Children and Monsters" arc, contained in BOOK TWO.

In this third volume, Lucifer's path crosses that of two other characters who illuminate his honesty from two very different directions — Solomon and Bergelmir. Imagine them as angels sitting on his shoulders, whispering contradictory advice. Not that Lucifer would ever encourage that degree of intimacy. Or sit still long enough to be advised.

Solomon is the self-appointed judge of Heaven, carrying out in death the role for which he was famous when he was alive. He journeys through the world, seeking out sinners and finding punishments that fit their crimes. He believes that this is a divinely appointed mission — that God himself imposes the duty on him, sending him his instructions in dreams. He's probably insane, although we were never entirely explicit about that. What he definitely is, though, is unrelenting and fanatical, adhering to a code that's all about moral absolutes and the need to submit to them.

Solomon's integrity gives us a useful vantage point from which to observe Lucifer's, because it's the very opposite of self-interested. He does what he does because he has to, and he mostly experiences his mission as a sense of urgency and anger, a desperate need to act. He makes a point of pride out of the fact that he has even executed judgment on his own father — and you get the sense that if he ever fell short of his own standards he'd be equally merciless with himself.

Bergelmir is his polar opposite. The brother of Loki, he embodies the same love of mischief and the same gleeful moral relativism. His lies are part of a wider philosophy, a statement of allegiance. In the great debate between order and chaos, he knows which side he's on.

Again, this isn't primarily about self-interest. Bergelmir doesn't lie exclusively for advantage, he lies because it's his nature to do so and because he finds lies more congenial than truth. When Lucifer comes to him to demand the ship *Naglfar* for a voyage to the Mansions of the Silence, rather than say yes or no Bergelmir responds by concocting a plot that depends absolutely on Lucifer's unwillingness to break a promise — a plot which will effectively cause Lucifer to promise to kill himself.

I don't remember ever discussing any of this explicitly with Peter, but it's obvious in re-reading these stories that it's one of the things I was obsessing on. Seven years later, we'd be co-plotting THE UNWRITTEN, a story about stories and about why stories matter to us. But it turns out that LUCIFER also concerns itself with fictions — the intentional, extemporized fictions that are lies; and their opposite, oaths and promises and statements of unvarnished truth.

It's hard to say, though, why that should be such a central issue in a story about the devil. If we were presenting Lucifer in the traditional mold as "the father of lies" then yeah, okay, there'd be a clear through-line. But we weren't. This is Neil Gaiman's Lucifer, not John Milton's, and as far back as "Season of Mists" he made it very clear that he never tempted any man or woman to commit a single sin. That's not his thing at all.

His thing is freedom — the ultimate freedom of self-determination. He wants to be the author of his own fate, and so finds himself forever at odds with the logic of a deterministic universe defined by its creator's will.

But maybe that's the point. Lucifer is the goal of his own quest, the harbor towards which he's always sailing. The treasure he seeks is his own selfhood, and it would damage and denature that treasure if he were ever to utter the false coin of a lie. It's not that he would care about taking unfair advantage — he does that all the time. What he would never put at risk is his sense of himself, the absolute and inviolable boundaries of his own nature.

There's a moment in Robert Bolt's masterpiece, *A Man for All Seasons*, when his protagonist, Thomas More, is called on to explain why he won't sign the act of succession — the parliamentary instrument which declared King Henry VIII's marriage to Catherine of Aragon invalid and his daughter Mary a bastard. It's just a piece of paper, More is told by his friend Norfolk. You can sign it and still in your heart believe something different. But More replies that this is impossible for him to do. When you swear an oath, you hold your soul in your hands like water. If you open your hands at that point, there's no going back. You're lost, and you'll never find yourself again.

Lucifer would understand that intimate and irrevocable link between your word and your self. God's word, the *logos*, created the universe. Our words create us, from one moment to the next. When you lie, it's that act of self-creation that's sabotaged and corrupted.

If this sounds dry or abstract, please believe me when I say that in the stories you're about to read, it's anything but. Truth and falsehood are battlefields here, but there are plenty of real battlefields too — on Earth, in Hell, and in places still further and stranger. And the stakes, for Lucifer and the rest of our cast of thousands, just keep on getting higher.

— Mike Carey
London, November 2013

In Gly, the fields where the damned were brought to suffer are empty at last.
No new souls have been transplanted. The old have been allowed to depart.
The sullen overseers now wear the livery of my household staff.
But they have no skills except in the administering of torture. It may be that I will have to release them from my service.
Is there sin, in Hell?
It seems that there should not be, and yet the weight of guilt I feel today is great.
Granted, I did not set these events in motion.
Amenadiel of the Thrones did that, when he challenged Lucifer Morningstar to single combat.
And it was not I who chose the battlefield. As the challenged party, that was Lucifer's right.
He named Effrul, and he gave the order to high lord Arux to begin preparations for a formal duel.

But as to what happened when he came here -- here to Hell -- for that I bear sole responsibility.
I have abused the holy laws of hospitality.
I have betrayed the trust of one who offered me no harm.
Who had in fact professed himself my patron and my friend.
And I have brought an angel to his death.
If I ever harbored any hope of redemption, it ends here. Now.

INFERNO

PART 1 of 3

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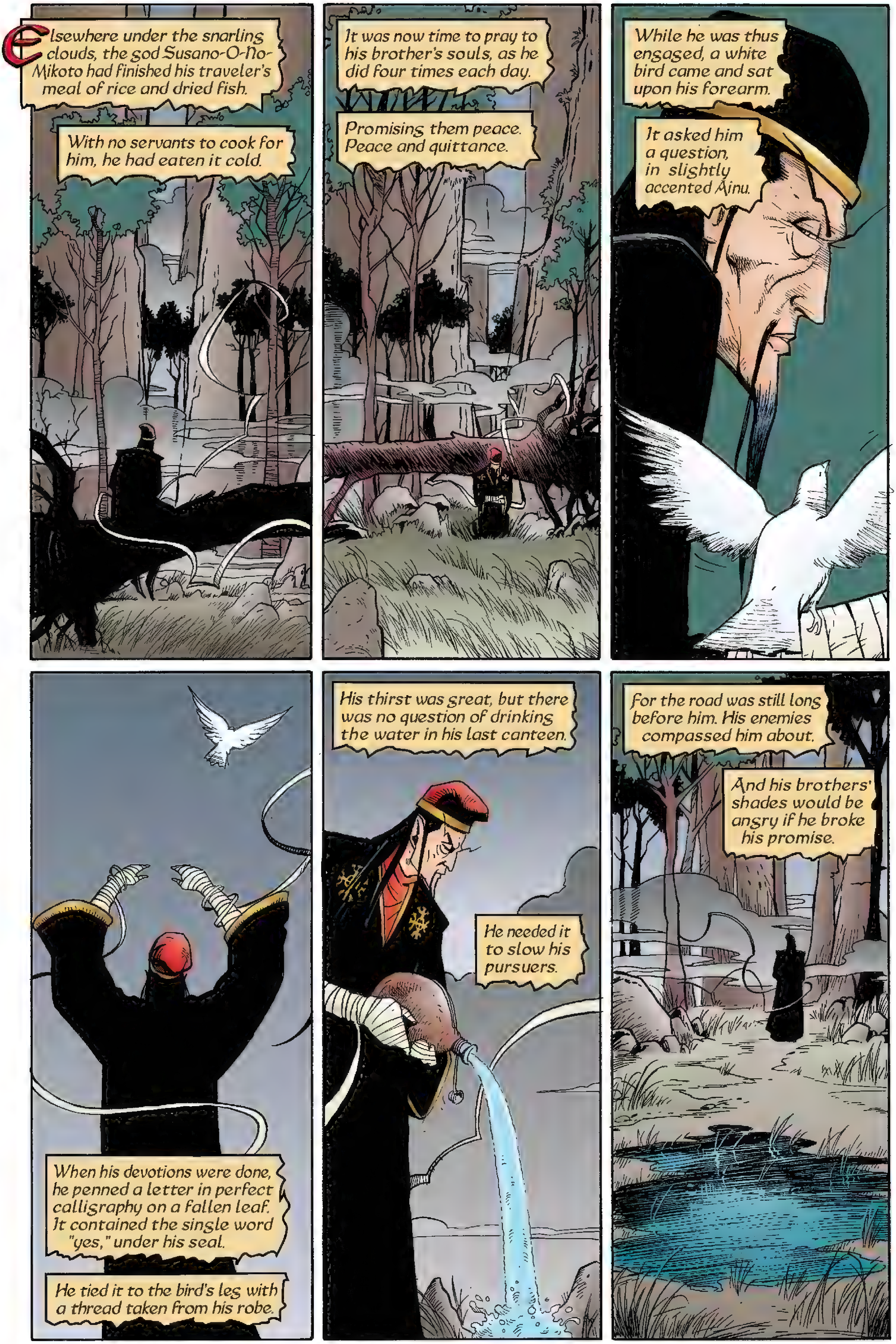
LUCIFER is based on characters created by
GAIMAN, KIETH, and DRINGENBERG

HELL.
THE TOWER OF RULE.
How many times do I have to *say* this?
He must not win.
REMIEL, I WOULD DEARLY *LOVE* TO PROMISE YOU A VICTORY.
BUT IT WOULD HURT MY PRIDE TO BE *FORSWORN* AS WELL AS DEAD.
Then perhaps the challenge was a poor idea in the *first* place.
Can you envision what they might *mean* for our rule over Hell's legions.
If Lucifer fights an angel of the *host,* and brings him down? How will I *command* them afterwards?
INDULGE MY CURIOSITY.
HOW DO YOU COMMAND THEM *NOW?*
Your jest is a poor one. *I* am the agent of God here, Amenadiel-- you are merely pursuing a private *vendetta.*
I repeat. Lucifer must *lose* this duel.
That is why I asked *Arux* to join us. Lucifer sent him to *oversee* this contest--
--so he is well placed to *advise* us as to the practicalities.

MY LORD REMIEL, I WAS NOT IN A POSITION TO *REFUSE* YOUR INVITATION. BUT I THINK I HAVE LITTLE TO CONTRIBUTE HERE.
AS TO THE PRACTICALITIES, HE IS *LUCIFER*. HE DOES NOT LOSE.
In case you have forgotten, Arux I am your master. Your power *devolves* from me.
I HAVE *NOT* FORGOTTEN.
Now, it may be that the Lightbringer is *weak* after his struggle against the Basanos.
We will *test* him with a feint. That should be easy enough to arrange.
If he seems vulnerable, then we will consider what *more* might be done.
MY LORD, I BEG YOUR *INDULGENCE*.
YOU ARE NEW TO HELL, AND IN SOME MATTERS YOUR *UNDERSTANDING* IS STILL IMPERFECT.
THERE ARE *ALLIANCES* AND OBLIGATIONS BETWEEN MY VASSAL LORDS THAT GO BACK TO THE DARKNESS BEFORE LIGHT.
IF THEY SUSPECT THAT I HAVE *CONSPIRED* AGAINST ONE OF THEIR NUMBER, THERE WILL BE CIVIL WAR. THEY WILL *UNSEAT* ME.
My dear lord Arux, you concern yourself over *nothing*.
I have already *chosen* who shall play host to Lucifer.
And trust me, he has no *allies* at all.

I am able to fill in the gaps in the story with later knowledge.
In the realms unnamed, at exactly this time, a hunt was in progress. It was led by Mazikeen, daughter of Ophur.
And coordinated by her aide de camp--
WHAT NEWS?
BOTH SWEET AND BITTER, WAR LEADER!
--a tiny demon of the Elokim.
You will have heard of him since of course. Of the bone he sings to, of his cruel loss and his crueler revenge.
WE HAVE DRIVEN HIM EAST, AWAY FROM HIS MOTHER'S BORDERS.
BUT HE IS A THUNDER GOD, AND THE STORM IS BUILDING. HE INTENDS TO FIGHT.
Elokim Shaer. Mazikeen's arrow.
TELL MISRAN TO SPREAD AS THINLY AS HE CAN, BUT TO KEEP LINE OF SIGHT.
SUSANO MUST NOT DOUBLE BACK THROUGH OUR LINES.
AS FOR THE STORM--
--IT BRINGS US TO HIM, MORE SURELY THAN ANY MAP.


Elsewhere under the snarling clouds, the god Susano-O-No-Mikoto had finished his traveler's meal of rice and dried fish.
With no servants to cook for him, he had eaten it cold.
It was now time to pray to his brother's souls, as he did four times each day.
Promising them peace. Peace and quittance.
While he was thus engaged, a white bird came and sat upon his forearm.
It asked him a question, in slightly accented Ainu.
When his devotions were done, he penned a letter in perfect calligraphy on a fallen leaf. It contained the single word "yes," under his seal.
He tied it to the bird's leg with a thread taken from his robe.
His thirst was great, but there was no question of drinking the water in his last canteen.
He needed it to slow his pursuers.
For the road was still long before him. His enemies compassed him about.
And his brothers' shades would be angry if he broke his promise.

I had thought that he would fly down out of the sulfurous sky.
But this proved not to be the case.
And where the damned are farmed like cattle for their pain--
--the devil rides out like lord of the manor.
LUCIFER MORNINGSTAR. YOU ARE MOST *WELCOME* AT MY HOUSE.
DUKE OF GLY. I APOLOGIZE IN *ADVANCE* FOR YOUR TROUBLE.
IT'S GOING TO BE *CONSIDERABLE.*
AH. HIGH LORD ARUX INFORMED ME ONLY AN *HOUR* SINCE THAT I WAS TO BE YOUR HOST.
I REGRET THAT I'VE HAD SCANT *TIME* TO--
THAT'S NOT WHAT I *MEANT.*

I'VE COME ALONE, AS THE CUSTOM *IS* ON SUCH OCCASIONS.
ALL I NEED IS A ROOM. WE CAN SORT OUT THE *DETAILS* LATER.
YOU WERE IN *EFFRUL* WHEN I SAW YOU LAST. IN THE COMPANY OF THE LADY *LYS*.
AYE, I WAS.
THAT LIAISON IS NOW *CONCLUDED*.
IT'S UNUSUAL FOR A HUMAN SOUL TO WIN A *TITLE* IN HELL.
I'D BE INTERESTED TO *HEAR*--
LORD LUCIFER, KEEP YOU AND SAVE YOU!
YOUR *BLESSING* ON US, MORNINGSTAR.
MY BLESSING? AN *ODD* CHOICE OF WORDS.
GOD'S WOUNDS!

GUUUH!
WHO ARE THESE MEN? HOW COULD THIS *HAPPEN?*
MY LORD, THEY--THEY'RE OF YOUR OWN *HOUSEHOLD.* I COULDN'T KNOW--
LUCIFER! YOU *BLEED.*
IT'S NOTHING. SHOW ME THAT ROOM, AND I'LL *WASH* FROM THE ROAD.
AND THEN PERHAPS WE CAN REVIEW YOUR *SECURITY* ARRANGEMENTS.

The storm broke.
It caught the Lilim on the bald flank of a ridge.
The first bolt ripped the ground away from their horses' hooves.
There was nowhere for them to go.
The lightning was like the tail of some demonic scorpion, striking where it pleased.
They might have panicked then, and been lost, had it not been for their general.
They saw her riding forward, into the swag-bellied clouds, the half of her face that was visible twisted in a grin.
And so they followed her into the heart of the maelstrom.
Like surgeons feeling blindly for a cancer.

A dangerous opponent--Susano-O-No-Mikoto.
They thought the storm his greatest weapon.
Therefore they were unlikely to see it as a feint.

Lucifer's thoughts rested on her, doubtless, as he wipes away the stains of his mortality.
YOU MUST NOT GO ON WITH THIS.
WHY? BECAUSE I MIGHT LOSE?
A STRANGE REASON FOR CALLING OFF A DUEL.
WHAT IF I WERE TO INTERCEPT SUSANO? BRING THE FEATHERS BACK TO YOU?
THEN WOULD YOUR STRENGTH BE RESTORED?
NO NEED EVEN FOR THAT.
IF THEY WERE TO BE DESTROYED, EVERYTHING STORED UP IN THEM WOULD FLOW BACK TO ME.
It was an irony very much to his taste, that he could no longer live without her.
THEN COMMAND ME, LORD.
AS YOU DID BEFORE.

THIS WAS A FORTRESS BEFORE IT WAS A CHATEAU.
THE INNER AND OUTER WALLS ARE TWENTY SPANS APART, AND THE SPACE IN BETWEEN WAS LEFT CLEAR, AS A KILLING GROUND.
YES. SO I SEE.
BUT I DOUBT THAT INVADING ARMIES WILL BE AN ISSUE HERE.
ANYONE TRYING TO FORESTALL THIS DUEL--
--WILL PROBABLY SEND SINGLE ASSASSINS.
I HAVE CONSIDERED THAT, TOO.
THE TOWER IN WHICH I HAVE LODGED YOU IS MY OWN ADDITION TO THE CASTLE OF GLY.
IT HAS A UNIQUE FEATURE, WHICH I WILL DEMONSTRATE FOR YOU LATER.
YOU'VE MADE OTHER CHANGES TOO, I SEE.
I USED TO COME THIS WAY QUITE OFTEN ONCE. AS I REMEMBER, THOSE WERE PAINFIELDS.
THEY ARE STILL PAINFIELDS.
IT IS JUST THAT I HAVE ORDERED A FALLOW SEASON, LORD LUCIFER.
TO ADD SAVOUR TO THE NEXT YEAR'S CROP.
AH. OF COURSE.
THEN IT DOESN'T BOTHER YOU, THE HARVESTING OF PAIN?
NO PRICKINGS OF CONSCIENCE--

--NOW THAT YOU FIND YOURSELF AT THE *OTHER* END OF THE LASH?
YOU ARE QUICK AND YOU ARE STRONG, SIR DEVIL. BUT THIS MORNING A *DAGGER* THRUST MADE YOU BLEED.
AND YOUR POINT IS--?
I BELIEVE YOU *SEE* MY POINT.
I KILLED AN *INNOCENT*, ONCE. AND THREE HUNDRED *YEARS* OF TORMENT HAVE NOT WASHED THAT STAIN FROM MY SOUL.
I WOULD NOT MAKE THE SAME MISTAKE *AGAIN*.
SO TELL ME, LUCIFER, FOR I CRAVE TO KNOW. ARE YOU, AS THE BIBLE SAYS, THE *ARCHITECT* OF HELL?
WHETHER AS JOKE OR VENGEANCE OR I KNOW NOT WHAT, IS THIS *MONSTROSITY* YOUR HANDIWORK?
IT ACCRETED *AROUND* ME.
CERTAINLY I DID NOTHING TO *STOP* IT.
I SUPPOSED IT DEPENDS ON YOUR *PRIORITIES*. KILLING ME WOULD LOOK GOOD ON YOUR RÉSUMÉ--IF YOU COULD *MANAGE* IT.
BUT *THIS* PLACE? IT'S GOT ITS OWN MOMENTUM.

HAH! WELL, I AM ANSWERED. THE TEMPTATION WAS TOO *GREAT*. TO STRIKE THE *HEAD* OFF WITH ONE THRUST.
YOU WERE SENT HERE TO *TEST* ME, THEN.
nobody *sends* me anywhere. and your plans to topple hell are your own business.
MY--MY OWN--?
I Don't even *live* here any-more.
It's a *system*, that's all. It matches supply and demand in the matter of *agony*.
Remove it and he'll put something *else* in its place.
AYE, SIR. BUT THE HEAT OF THE FORGE IS NOT THE SAME FOR THE *HORSESHOE* AS FOR THE *SMITH*.
YOU UNDERSTAND.
yes, I suppose I *do*.
we might even talk *strategies* at some point.
If nothing else, we can give each other the luxury of a new *perspective*.

Her friends call her warrior. Her enemies berserker.
All agree that Mazikeen of the Lilim will fight on until her body is rendered tallow. And will then spit as she burns.
But when she hacked off a score of the bodiless limbs, and a hundred more had grown to replace them--
--she was obliged to take the battle to a different front.
WAR LEADER, WAIT! WE WILL JOIN YOU!
STAY WHERE YOU *ARE*.
THERE MUST BE ANOTHER PATH FURTHER DOWN THE SLOPE. GO *SLOWLY* AND TEST THE GROUND.
LOOK FOR MY TRAIL. I'LL MAKE IT OBVIOUS.
HE'S LEFT THE *ROAD*-- STRIKING OFF SOUTH.
GOOD. MISRAN WILL BE *AHEAD* OF HIM BY NOW. HE HAS NOWHERE TO GO.

AYE, BUT HE *DOES.*
HE IS HEADING FOR A *HOUSE,* ON THE FAR SIDE OF THIS PEAK. SCARCELY A LEAGUE AWAY.
A HOUSE? NOBODY *BUILDS* OUT HERE.
NOBODY COULD *LIVE*--
SEE, WAR LEADER. THERE!

LORD ARUX'S MANOR HOUSE.
You say he bled?
MY LORD, YES. HE SLEW TWO OF THE THREE ATTACKERS WITH HIS OWN HANDS.
BUT THE THIRD--
But he bled?
You see? I was right. He's weak!
HE'S ALSO STILL ALIVE. YOUR ASSAULT FAILED.
IT'S SCANT CONSOLATION THAT HE HAD TO CHANGE HIS SHIRT.
BY YOUR LEAVE, REMIEL. MAY I BE EXCLUDED FROM WHATEVER STEPS YOU TAKE NOW?
I HAVE DUTIES AS LORD MARTIAL, AND THE DUEL IS ONLY A DAY AWAY.
No. You may not be excluded. You must find me an assassin--one who you fear to meet yourself.
Amenadiel, you have scant respect for me, I know--
--but I have a key that I think will unlock him.

As she scrambled down the rockface, Mazikeen saw Susano approach the edge of the lake of fire.
Walking at a slow, even pace--as though he presented himself as an offering to that strange monument.
But the tower required no such sacrifice.
It seemed that the god was both expected and welcome.

YOU MUST UNDERSTAND THAT I DETEST COMPANY. *ALL* COMPANY.
YOUR VERY *PRESENCE* MAKES MY SKIN CRAWL.
I HAD HEARD THIS, GREAT ARTIFICER. NOR DO I COME HERE *LIGHTLY*, OR WILLFULLY.
BUT YOU YOURSELF GAVE ME LEAVE, AND MY *ADMIRATION* FOR YOUR WORK--
YES, YES. ENOUGH.
I SAID YOU COULD HAVE SANCTUARY HERE IF YOU COULD *DELIVER* WHAT YOU PROMISED.
HAVE YOU?
SEE FOR YOURSELF.
OH, THE GEMSTONES AND THE PRECIOUS METALS WILL COME LATER. BUT THE *SUBSTANCE* OF OUR AGREEMENT--
YES. THE SUBSTANCE.
BRING HER FORWARD, INTO THE *LIGHT*.

I HAVE WAITED SO LONG TO SEE YOU AGAIN, MAZIKEEN, THAT I COULD ALMOST *FORGIVE* YOU.
BUT I SUPPOSE YOU'LL HAVE TO BE *PUNISHED.*
AS AN EXAMPLE TO *OTHER* UNDUTIFUL WIVES.

She whom I love and hate most in the world went out riding-with such mischief in her heart.
Lys. The Lady Lys. Who had surfeited on cruelty and then almost died of compassion.
In Effrul, as in most of Hell, an unguarded coach is at worst a diversion, at best a banquet.
The gossamer-winged dwellers of the middle heights paused in their internecine wars to fall on her coach and feast.
But the coachman just laughed as they stooped over him.
And the black armorial crest on the carriage's side bore a legend which to the eyes of the demons reads "Do it then, and be dust."
Whereupon it occurred to the sky-demons that to risk the final death for the sake of a hearty breakfast is a fool's transaction.
Even in Hell, there are far easier meals to be had.
Lys's heart called out to them, for she had been like them once. A creature of air and appetite.
Until she met with me.

Until I poisoned her.
Her father had swallowed poison too, but it was none of mine.
I did not love him enough for that.
LORD ARUX, THE ASSASSIN AWAITS YOUR PLEASURE.
THANK YOU, PRACKSPOOR. LET HIM COME.
I ADVISE YOU AGAIN TO RECONSIDER. YOU ALIGN YOURSELF AGAINST THE MORNINGSTAR.
IF YOUR HAND IS SEEN IN THIS, THE ANGELS WILL NOT BE ENOUGH TO PROTECT YOU.
AND WHAT PROTECTION WILL I ENJOY IF I DEFY THEM? LIKE ALL THE LORDS OF HELL, I ONLY RULE BY THEIR PATRONAGE.
SEND HIM IN. AND THEN LEAVE US.
GOOD DAY TO YOU, BRAID.
I HEAR IMPRESSIVE REPORTS OF YOUR SKILLS.
YOU HEAR NOTHING FROM THOSE I HAVE VISITED. GOD AND ANGEL AND DEMON, THEIR SILENCE SPEAKS LOUDEST FOR ME.
WHO WOULD YOU HAVE DEAD?
YOUR PROFESSIONAL ATTENTIONS ARE REQUIRED FOR LUCIFER MORNINGSTAR.
THIS IS VIRTUS, BY THE WAY. HE IS TO BE YOUR PARTNER IN THE ENTERPRISE.

A CHERUB? WHAT FOR?
FEAR. SHAME. DESPAIR.
IS LUCIFER ESPECIALLY *SUSCEPTIBLE* TO CHORAL SINGING?
THE LORD LUCIFER IS CURRENTLY... NOT *HIMSELF*. BUT HE REMAINS A DANGEROUS OPPONENT.
THERE'S SOMETHING TO BE SAID FOR MAKING *DOUBLY* SURE.
YOU HAVE PAID ME, AND YOU HAVE SPOKEN A *NAME* TO ME.
AGAINST THIS SENTENCE THERE IS *NO* APPEAL.

INFERNO

PART 2 of 4

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LUCIFER BASED ON CHARACTERS CREATED BY GAIMAN, KIETH, AND DRINGENBERG

As for Susano? His manners, normally equal to any situation, were put under the severest strain.
WATCH.
BAROOM

WELL...?
EXTRAORDINARY. YOU FOUND A WAY TO MOVE YOUR CLOCK *BACKWARDS* WITHIN TIME'S TORRENT.
DON'T BE ABSURD, SUSANO-O-NO-MIKOTO. THAT WOULD BE *BANAL*.
IT IS THE SLIPSHOD MATERIALS OF *REALITY* THAT THE CLOCK MANIPULATES. DIRECTLY.
AND IT IS NOT *LIMITED* TO TIME.
AH. OF COURSE.
IF I WERE STAYING HERE *LONGER*, I WOULD BEG YOU TO EXPLAIN ITS FUNCTIONING.
BUT ALAS, MY *BUSINESS* COERCES MY MANNERS TO A DISTRESSING EXTENT, AND I MUST NOW DEPART.
YOUR *PARDON*, GREAT SCORIA?
I WAS SPEAKING TO THE AUTOMATON. THEY RESPOND ONLY TO *RUHOK*, THE LANGUAGE OF MY DEMON FOREFATHERS.
THE DEMONSTRATION I JUST GAVE YOU WILL HAVE A *DESTABILIZING* EFFECT ON THE LAND AROUND US.
YOU *CANNOT* LEAVE. NOT YET.
WHEN THE THIRD BRASS ARMATURE IS AT THE *VERTICAL*, THEY WILL READY SUPPER. I'LL SEE YOU THEN.
LIKE YOU, I HAVE *OTHER* BUSINESS THAT CALLS ME FIRST.

WHY NOT JUST --
-- TO THE *DEATH?*
In the case of some of the duelists, death proved to be a little *difficult* to define.
The Lords of Effrul agreed on this wording because it *works*. Most of the time.
We'll fight until one of us tears out the other's *heart*, and eats it.
Any breach of the rules, and the Lords Martial will combine their powers to *kill* the transgressor.
AND IS THE ANGEL... *HUF... STRONGER* THAN YOU, LUCIFER? IN YOUR CURRENT STATE?
YOU MIGHT LEND YOUR *WEIGHT* TO THIS WHILE YOU ANSWER.
My strength at the moment is scarcely greater than *yours.*
And Amenadiel could *tear* you like paper.

WELL, MIGHT NOT A DEVIL LAY BY HIS HEART, AND FIGHT *WITHOUT* IT?
CRASH!!
POSSIBLE. BUT AGAINST THE RULES.
AND *OBVIOUS* EVEN TO THE MOST CURSORY INSPECTION.
YOU'VE OPENED YOUR *WOUND* AGAIN. HERE.
THANK YOU.
MY LORD! MY LORD!
I TOLD HER YOU WEREN'T *RECEIVING*, MY LORD, BUT SHE INSISTED. AND I COULD NOT REFUSE HER.
SPEAK SENSE, MAN.
WHO INSISTED? WHO'S COME?
THE LADY LYS.

MAZIKEEN.
MY LOVE.
YOU'VE CHANGED YOUR FACE. THE NEW ONE MAKES A *CURIOUS* EFFECT.
LOOSEN MY CHAINS, THEN, AND LET ME SEE WHAT I CAN MAKE OF YOURS.
COULD YOU FIND IT IN YOUR HEART TO BEG MY *FORGIVENESS?*
FOR THE *BETRAYAL.* FOR THE BREAKING OF YOUR VOWS.
THERE WERE NO VOWS. WE SHARED BLOOD AND WE RUTTED TOGETHER.
WE *CHOSE* EACH OTHER FOR A TIME. THAT'S ALL.

NO. THAT IS *NOT* ALL. FOR US IT WAS DIFFERENT.
RRRIP!
RRRRIP!!
IF YOU WERE TO ASK FOR FORGIVENESS, IT WOULD NOT REMOVE THE NEED TO *LASH* YOU.
BUT IT WOULD MAKE THE LASHING AN ACT OF *RECONCILIATION* BETWEEN US, NOT A PUNISHMENT.
DON'T WASTE YOUR *BREATH.*
EVERY *WORD* COULD BE A STROKE.

I APOLOGIZE *PROFUSELY*, LADY. I WOULD NOT HAVE MADE YOU WAIT.
IT'S NO MATTER, DUKE OF GLY. I *AMUSED* MYSELF BY LOOKING AT THE PORTRAITS.
I NOTICE YOU HAVEN'T YET SAT *YOURSELF*.
GOD FORBID. I STAND IN NO LINE OF *DESCENT*, AND I WILL NEVER PUT MY LIKENESS HERE.
NO? WELL, PERHAPS IT'S FOR THE *BEST*.
A PAINTER MUST CAPTURE THE *ESSENCE*, NOT MERELY THE LIKENESS.
SOMETHING OF A *CHALLENGE*, WHEN THE SUBJECT IS SO MERCURIAL AND UNPREDICTABLE.
AND THE LORD *LUCIFER* IS HERE TOO. HOW PERFECT. IT'S BEEN AN AGE, MORNINGSTAR.
A SCORE OF AGES.
I'VE LOST COUNT. BUT YOU HAVEN'T *CHANGED*, LYS.
NOT TRUE.
I HAVE CHANGED BEYOND ALL REACH OR *FATHOM*.

yes. perhaps you *have* at that.
have you passed through any *fires* lately?
NONE SO HOT AS *YOURS*. BUT HELL IS A COLD PLACE, THESE DAYS.
MADAM, WHAT IS IT THAT *BRINGS* YOU HERE?
PAINFUL AS IT MUST SURELY BE TO YOU...
WHY, I THANK YOU FOR YOUR *SOLICITUDE*, MASTER RUDD.
KLAK
I AM COME TO TELL YOU THAT MY FATHER IS *SUBORNED*. HE INTENDS TO ENSURE THAT THE VICTORY IN THE COMING DUEL GOES TO *AMENADIEL*.
ASSUMING IT IS *FOUGHT* AT ALL.
AND NOW PERHAPS YOU WILL SEE ME BACK TO MY *COACH*. IF MY ABSENCE IS NOTICED, IT WILL GO *HARD* ON ME.
AND AS GENTLEMEN I'M SURE YOU COULDN'T *BEAR* TO SEE ME SUFFER.

MY LIFE--
--IS A *MONUMENT.*
A MONUMENT TO OUTLAST *BRONZE,* GREAT SCORIA.
ALL THESE THINGS I HAVE MADE, THAT NOBODY ELSE HAS DARED TO *DREAM OF!*
EVEN THESE IRON *HOMUNCULI* THAT SERVE MY NEEDS.
TRIVIAL. TRIVIAL! BUT THE MIND *LABORS,* AND THE HAND GIVES BIRTH.
UUUUUUURGGH!
SKLANG!
SKLANG!
SKLANG!
KLANG!
SHE *MOCKED* ME. EVEN AS I WAS BEATING HER.
AND SHE WOULDN'T *STOP.*

INESTIMABLE MAKER, THE *PERFIDY* OF WOMEN--
YOU WANT TO KNOW HOW IT *WORKS?* THE CLOCK?
YOU WANT TO SEE HOW *WONDROUSLY* I HAVE WROUGHT?
I CURSE THE *URGENCY* OF MY ERRAND, THAT MAKES EXPLORATIONS IMPOSSIBLE.
I CAME HERE ONLY TO DELIVER YOUR WIFE, AND TO *FREE* MYSELF FROM HER PURSUIT. NOW I FEAR I MUST--
COME.
I'LL SHOW YOU HOW PITIFULLY WIDE OF THE MARK THE BITCH'S *TAUNTS* WENT.
I AM...AT YOUR *DISPOSAL*, GREAT SCORIA.
BRING *HER*, TOO.
YOU *WILL* WORSHIP ME, MAZIKEEN.
YOU WILL YET WORSHIP ME.
I HAVE STARED INTO THE *LIGHT*--
--AND YOU ARE *ALL* MY SHADOWS.

NOTHING TO *SAY*, MASTER RUDD?
NOTHING TO ANY *PURPOSE*. I DID NOT KNOW THAT YOU AND LUCIFER HAD--
--HAD *KNOWN* EACH OTHER.
AH! YOU MUST GIVE UP THESE EUPHEMISMS NOW. THE ARISTOCRACY *DISDAIN* SUCH NICETIES.
THERE WAS A TIME WHEN I WAS KNOWN FOR KNOWING *EVERYBODY*.
LYS, I HURT YOU ALMOST BEYOND *BEARING*, I KNOW.
I CANNOT *BELIEVE* THAT YOU'VE COME HERE AS A FRIEND.
BUT PAIN IS A *CONUNDRUM*, CHRISTOPHER. TO YOU MORE THAN ANYONE.
I USED TO FIND IT EROTIC.
BUT THEN, I HAD NEVER ENCOUNTERED A PAIN OF THE *SPIRIT* THAT THE BODY COULD NOT QUENCH.

MY INFORMATION COMES WITH A *PRICE.*
IF MY FATHER'S TREACHERY COMES OUT, AND HIS BROTHER LORDS UNSEAT HIM, MY RIGHT TO THE *SUCCESSION* MAY COME INTO QUESTION.
SHOULD IT COME TO A VOTE, BOTH YOU AND LUCIFER WILL *SUPPORT* MY CLAIM.
WELL, FOR MYSELF I CAN *PROMISE.* BUT FOR HIM...
DO NOT THINK TO *TOUCH* ME, MASTER RUDD!
I WILL HOOK OUT YOUR EYES WITH MY *THUMBNAILS* BEFORE YOU TOUCH ME AGAIN!
I MEANT ONLY TO ASSIST YOU INTO THE CARRIAGE. I KNOW WELL ENOUGH THAT'S ALL *SPENT* BETWEEN US.
ALL SPENT? NO, I HAVE BUSINESS WITH YOU *YET,* CHRISTOPHER.
BUT NOT TONIGHT.
TONIGHT YOU MAY *SLEEP.*
SO LONG AS *CONSCIENCE* AND CIRCUMSTANCE ALLOW.

PITY. ANGUISH. FEAR.
BE *SILENT*, CREATURE, AND LET ME WORK. THE CIRCLETS ARE SENSITIVE TO *MAGIC*, BUT THERE'S NOTHING HERE.
NOTHING THAT *THREATENS* US--
--BUT PERHAPS ENOUGH TO LIGHT OUR *WAY*.
I SENSE A *WARD* AND A *MAKING*. IF THEY'RE GUARDING LORD LUCIFER, THEN HE'S UP THERE.

DOOR'S *OPEN.*
FOR WHAT IT'S WORTH.
I'D RATHER HAVE YOU *ALIVE,* GIVEN THE CHOICE.
THAT WAY YOU CAN BETRAY YOUR *EMPLOYERS.*
BRAVE WORDS. BUT YOU'VE ONLY TWO SMALL *WEAVINGS* TO PROTECT YOU, LUCIFER.
ARMIES AND CITADELS WOULD NOT BE *ENOUGH.*
TAKE IT UP WITH THE *OWNER.*
THEY'RE *HIS* SPELLS, NOT MINE.
AH. SO *THIS* IS THE WARD.
THE MIGHTY MORNINGSTAR HIDING BEHIND *HEDGE* MAGICS.
BUT *LOOK* NOW, LUCIFER--
--AT WHAT WAS HIDING BEHIND *ME!*

THIS CREATURE IS A CHERUB. BUT APPARENTLY IT IS *MAD*. SICK WITH PARANOIA AND SELF-HATRED.
ITS WEAKNESS INFECTS ALL IT *TOUCHES*.
AND NOW IT IS *INSIDE* YOU.

DOWN, DOWN, DOWN. MORE THAN A MILE. I BUILT INTO BEDROCK, BUT THAT'S NOT THE WONDER.
ANY MOLE CAN DIG. ANY FOOL WITH A *SHOVEL* CAN DIG.
THERE! WHAT WAS LUCIFER'S REBELLION COMPARED TO *THIS?*
WHAT HAS *ANYONE* DONE EQUAL TO THIS?
CELESTIAL ARTISAN, I *SEE* BUT DO NOT COMPREHEND.
YOU MUST *EXPOUND* THIS MARVEL TO ME.
EXPOUND IT? IT'S *OBVIOUS.* I DUG INTO HIS MIND.
THESE ARE THE THOUGHTS OF GOD.

I BELIEVE I COULD HAVE *BESTED* YOU ANYWAY, MORNINGSTAR.
BUT IT WAS LORD ARUX'S WISH THAT I TAKE NO *UNNECESSARY* RISKS.
A RISK... IMPLIES...THAT THIS COULD HAVE ENDED... DIFFERENTLY.
VERY TRUE. AND THAT IS WHAT I *TOLD* HIM.
THEY SAY YOU WERE AN *ANGEL* ONCE. WELL, SO AM I.
I AM THE ANGEL OF *MERCY*, WHOSE HANDS BRING THE END OF ALL PAIN.
THE...LAST TIME I MET ONE OF YOUR RACE... I WAS ABLE TO STRIKE A *DEAL* WITH HER.
ARE YOU... AMENABLE...TO *REASON*?
BY NO *MEANS*.

WELL, IT WAS WORTH *TRYING*. MARGINALLY.
"SISYPHUS."
THE--THE TOWER--
--WAS MADE OF SPELLS, NOT STONE. THAT WAS THE *MAKING* YOU SENSED. GOODBYE, ASSASSIN.

I came on the scene too late. But made up for it by issuing a great many unnecessary commands.
HAVE THIS *OFFAL* CLEARED AWAY.
AND DOUBLE THE *GUARD*.
AYE, MY LORD. AT ONCE.
HAVE YOU SUSTAINED SOME FURTHER *INJURY*, LORD LUCIFER? I HAVE SURGEONS--
NO. NO INJURY.
THIS IS SOMETHING I'M GOING TO HAVE TO WORK OUT FOR *MYSELF*.
THEN I'LL BID YOU GOODNIGHT. PERHAPS IN THE MORNING WE CAN--
...
WELL, TOMORROW IS TIME *ENOUGH*, TO BE SURE.
As I walked away from him, I drew it forth from my sleeve. The kerchief with which he stanched his wound in the torture shed.
In truth, I had forgotten I had it.
If my steps were heavy, it was because the temptation was so terrible. I should have cast it away there and then.
But since my ultimate plan was so ambitious--
--every road that it led to was black with sin.

To the north west of Hell, where now I write--close to the disputed border between Effrul and Amsath--there is a valley, through which a poisoned river runs.
Stands of poisoned trees, feeding on its waters, thrust up their pleading hands as they die.
The laws of Effrul call for "a dueling ground in open air, twice ten leagues across"--their infernal lordships desiring to see a hunt as well as a kill.
The space was duly marked with blood and salt.
The carpenters of Lord Arùx had been told to build accommodations for a million spectators.
More than twice that number had arrived before the building even commenced.
But the carpenters could have begun their hammering before Adam fell, and leveled all of Eden for wood.
It would not have been enough. Not for this fight.
What matter that Lucifer had abandoned these realms for Earth? Or that Amenadiel had given control of the angelic host back to its several generals?
In their minds, this was Hell against Heaven.

And everyone hoped that this time the issue would be settled properly.
INFERNO
PART 3 of 4
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LUCIFER BASED ON CHARACTERS CREATED BY GAIMAN, KIETH, AND DRINGENBERG
LOOK AT THAT HEAVEN-SPEWED BASTARD. STANDING THERE LIKE HIS SHIT DON'T STINK.
IT DOESN'T. IT SINGS HOSANNAS.
HOW CAN HE HOPE TO STAND AGAINST LUCIFER?
TEN SOULS SAYS THE FIGHT IS OVER BEFORE HE STRIKES A BLOW.
I'LL TAKE THAT WAGER.
YOU ARE PENSIVE, MY DAUGHTER.
NO, FATHER. MERELY BORED.
THIS FUTILE POMP AND CEREMONY WEARIES ME TO DEATH.
BLOOD!
GIVE US BLOOD!
THE CROWD GROWS RESTLESS. EXCUSE ME, LYS.

I AM ARUX OF EFFRUL, AND I STAND AS *LORD MARTIAL* HERE.
THE DUKES DUROVALLIS AND CLOY STAND LIKEWISE, THEIR AUTHORITY NO LESS THAN MINE.
WHO SPEAKS FOR *AMENADIEL*, OF THE THRONES?
HIMSELF.
AND DO YOU HERE *ABIDE* BY THE CHALLENGE YOU HAVE ISSUED?
YES.
I DO.
AND WHO IS IT THAT SPEAKS FOR *LUCIFER MORNINGSTAR?*

I ASK AGAIN.
WHO *SPEAKS* FOR LUCIFER MORNINGSTAR?
I DO!
I SPEAK FOR HIM!
WHAT? DUKE OF GLY, THERE IS NO *PRECEDENT* FOR THIS.
THE RESPONDENT MUST ANSWER THE *CHALLENGE* OR HIS LIFE IS FORFEIT.
AYE, MY LORD. I *KNOW* THAT--
"BUT THE RESPONDENT IS *INDISPOSED.*"

Indisposed! The cherub Virtus had infected his soul and his volition. He could not summon the will to move.
His mind kept trying to grasp its present predicament, only to slip away obliquely into other places.
THIS IS NOT OVER, MORNINGSTAR. AND IT *MUST* BE OVER. WHILE YOU LIVE, THERE IS NO *JOY* FOR ME.
I CHALLENGE YOU TO *FACE* ME-- ALONE. WHEREVER AND WHENEVER YOU LIKE.
VERY WELL. IN *EFFRUL*, A YEAR FROM NOW. WHEN I AM RAW AND *CRIPPLED* FROM THE FIRE.
WHEN THE *TOWER* HAS BEEN STRUCK BY LIGHTNING.
DO NOT... MOCK ME... CREATURE.
I KNOW YOU...FOR WHAT YOU ARE. AND YOU ARE *NOTHING*.
In a moment of lucidity, he saw what he would have to do.
But it would mean dragging the dead weight of his body out of the castle to the fields beyond.
He did not even reach the doorway of his room.

"THE MIND OF *GOD?*"
EXACTLY. MY PROBLEM WAS A *METAPHYSICAL* ONE, YOU SEE.
AND THE METAPHYSICS OF ENGINEERING, MY DEAR SUSANO, IS STILL IN ITS *INFANCY.*
I WISHED TO MEASURE TIME AND SPACE BY REFERENCE TO SOME *ABSOLUTE* POINT.
YET TIME AND SPACE LIE IN AN UGLY *HEAP,* ALL TANGLED UP WITH EACH OTHER AND EVERYTHING ELSE.
BUT GOD! MEASURED FROM *HIM,* THE DISTANCE IS ALWAYS ZERO.
THE TIME IS ALWAYS *NOW.*
I USED A DRILL SO *SMALL.* SO VERY SMALL.
ITS TIP A *MOUNTAIN* OF DIAMOND SHARPENED DOWN TO AN INVISIBLE SPLINTER.

BUT... GREAT SCORIA. THE MIND OF *YAHWEH!*
HOW WOULD SUCH A THING BE *POSSIBLE?* ONLY A MIRACLE--
A MIRACLE! YES!
AND THOSE WHO *SNEER* AT MIRACLES REVEAL THEIR OWN INADEQUACIES. THEIR OWN *SMALLNESS.*
STILL NO *WORDS,* MY WIFE? STILL NO WORSHIP?
IS YOUR SOUL TOO *SHRIVELED* TO SEE THE GREATNESS OF WHAT I'VE DONE HERE?
LOOK! LOOK DOWN!
CAN YOU *GUESS* WHAT GOD IS THINKING OF?
HERE.
LET ME *SHOW* YOU.

I cannot tell you how *tired* I am--
--of having you *look* at me like that.
God set us here to *rule* this place. But you do nothing.
To do *nothing* is not to rule, Duma.
You object to my handling of this *affair* with Lucifer? Well *why?*
Because you *loved* him when he was Samael? Have you seen the *ruin* he is now?
This is the *end,* Duma!
I won't conceal your idleness and subversion anymore! I'll rule *alone!*
I'll bring the light of *truth* to this place.
If it kills us *all.*

FATHER, THESE PEOPLE HAVE CROSSED HALF OF *HELL* TO SEE A DUEL. THEY'LL ACCEPT NOTHING LESS.
YOU MUST *WAIT* UNTIL LUCIFER APPEARS, HOWEVER LONG IT TAKES.
THE RULES ARE *CLEAR*, LYS. THERE IS NO LEEWAY.
I BEG TO *DIFFER*.
THE RULES ALLOW FOR *EITHER* NAME TO BE CALLED THRICE.
AYE, THREE TIMES, WITH A FULL TURN OF THE *GLASS* IN BETWEEN.
DON'T BE TOO QUICK TO GIVE THE GAME TO HEAVEN, ARUX.
WELL. I DEFER TO MY BROTHER LORDS.
BUT PERHAPS ONE OF *YOU* WILL TELL THE CROWD THAT THEY MUST WAIT ON LUCIFER'S PLEASURE.
LORD ARUX. VOUCHSAFE ME A WORD.
I BEG YOUR *INDULGENCE*, MASTER RUDD.
I'M SCARCE IN *HUMOR*.

WELL, IF IT'S THE UNCERTAINTY OF THIS *CONTEST* THAT TROUBLES YOUR HEART, MY LORD--
--I'VE SOMETHING HERE THAT WILL BE BETTER THAN ANY *MEDICINE*.
SPEAK *PLAINLY*, MASTER RUDD.
LUCIFER'S *POWER* IS ALL BUT GONE.
IF HE ENTERS THE ARENA AT ALL, HE WILL TRY TO *AVOID* THE ANGEL FOR AS LONG AS HE CAN.
HE TOLD ME THAT HIS SERVANT, *MAZIKEEN*, IS SEEKING TO RESTORE HIS STRENGTH. HIS AIM WILL BE TO *DELAY* THE FIGHT UNTIL SHE SUCCEEDS.
BUT FROM THIS HE *CANNOT* HIDE.
WHAT IS IT?
SOMETHING OF HIS THAT IS NOW *YOURS*. SOMETHING THAT WILL YEARN *TOWARDS* HIM, WHEREVER HE IS.
IT WORKS BY THE MAGIC OF *SYMPATHIES*, MY LORD.
YOU HAVE FOUND SOME OF HIS *HAIR* OR HIS BLOOD. OR THE PARING OF A NAIL. REMARKABLE.
IT MAY NOT *COME* TO A FIGHT, OF COURSE. BUT STILL--
TO OPEN IT WILL PROBABLY BREAK THE CHARM. BUT MY LORD, IN THE MATTER OF MY REWARD--
YES, YES.
--THAT DISCUSSION WE CAN CONVENIENTLY POSTPONE. AFTER ALL--
--THIS MAY NOT EVEN COME TO A FIGHT.

DUKE OF GLY.
AHH! LADY LYS! I DIDN'T HEAR YOU APPROACH.
GOOD MORROW TO YOU.
WHATEVER GIFT YOU GAVE MY FATHER...
...IT SEEMED TO LIGHTEN HIS MOOD CONSIDERABLY.
IT WAS A CURIO, ONLY. A SHARED INTEREST THAT WE--
SLAP
CURSE YOU! YOU'VE BETRAYED LUCIFER, HAVEN'T YOU? AND ME WITH HIM.
I SHOULD HAVE REMEMBERED HOW EAGERLY YOU CLIMBED OVER ME TO REACH MY FATHER'S FAVOR.
Lys was my lover and my patron. Until I poisoned her joys with human grief and guilt.
LYS, I SAID NOTHING ABOUT YOU. YOU'RE SAFE.
I CARE NOT. I WILL SEE YOU PAID OUT IN FULL FOR THIS, RUDD. BY MY MOTHER'S BLOOD, I SWEAR IT.
The unthinkable harm we have done one another is the foundation of our intimacy.
As I believe is the case in many relationships.

I have tried since these events transpired to put myself in Mazikeen's place.
I have struggled to imagine what she felt.
Immersed in the effluent of God's living mind.
Drowning in his vast, slow thoughts.
These are mysteries that I cannot fathom, and was not meant to.
But I warrant it was more like Hell than Heaven.
To stand in a light so harsh must make everything else seem like pitch dark.
And leave you blinded to your own life.
KHHHHHHHH!

LUCIFER, YES? THE SPOILED BASTARD SON OF HEAVEN WHO COVERS YOU LIKE A STALLION, AND HIS WITLESS BROTHER MICHAEL.
OVER AND OVER AGAIN. YAHWEH'S FAVORITES, WHO HE TAUGHT TO HATE HIM.
IT IS AS IF HE IS OBSESSED. AS IF HE CANNOT EVEN SEE THE REST OF WHAT HE HAS MADE.
NOTHING IS REAL EXCEPT FOR LUCIFER AND MICHAEL.
YOU HAVE A KNIFE. INSIDE THE SLEEVE OF YOUR ROBE.
NO, GREAT SCORIA. I WAS MERELY--
YOU ARE MY GUEST, AND YOU WOULD OFFER VIOLENCE TO ME?
HAVEN'T YOU LISTENED TO ME? HE'S BEEN PREPARING FOR THIS SINCE THE WORLDS BEGAN.
NOW HE'S GOT WHAT HE WANTS, HE'S DONE WITH US. SO NOW I CAN BE GOD.
BRING THEM BOTH TO THE WORKROOM.
I AM AN ARTIFICER, YOU MUST REALIZE. A MAKER. AND YOU--
--YOU ARE ONLY MATERIALS.

DUMA...THE PAINFIELDS...
I NEED TO...

THE GLASS IS *EMPTY.*
INDEED. IT HAS BEEN FOR SOME SEVERAL *MOMENTS* NOW.
BUT I WOULD NOT HAVE IT *SAID* THAT I FAVORED HEAVEN.
THIS IS THE *SECOND* CALL. WHO IS IT SPEAKS FOR LUCIFER MORNINGSTAR?
WILL HE MAKE *ANSWER* TO THIS CHALLENGE OR NO?
IT IS *STRANGE* THAT HE SHOULD NOT APPEAR.
AYE. HE COULD NEVER *ABIDE* TO BE FORSWORN.
THAT WAS IN TIMES *PAST,* DUROVALLIS.
HE IS NO LONGER THE POWER HE WAS.

SET ME DOWN THERE. WHERE THE BLADES ARE.
The cherubim are emotional lattices, nothing more.
So I was told much later, by a creature who claimed to have been one.
They respond to emotion as a boat responds to a following wind.
Or a crosswind, for that matter.

Or a hurricane.

HAMMER. BRADAWL. CHISEL. KNIFE.
CHAIN THEM. MY WIFE TO THE BENCH. THE STORM GOD TO THE PILLAR.
SCORIA, THIS IS A BREACH OF HOSPITALITY.
IT WILL HAVE *CONSEQUENCES*.
A HUSBAND HAS *RIGHTS*, MAZIKEEN. SOLACES. HAVE YOU THOUGHT ABOUT THEM *ONCE?*
WHAT IF MY SEED WERE TO *DIE?* WHAT IF ALL MY *GREATNESS* WERE TO DIE?
WELL, IT WILL *NOT* DIE!
NO.

NOT LIKE THIS. NOT IN A LABORER'S APRON. I WILL COME TO YOU AS A GOD *SHOULD*.
I WILL PUT OUT YOUR *EYES* WITH MY BRIGHTNESS.
BUT I WILL FILL YOUR *WOMB* BY WAY OF RECOMPENSE.
SUSANO. IF YOU DESTROY THE *FEATHERS* WE CAN MAKE TRUCE...
...FIGHT HIM TOGETHER.
BUT MY MOTHER HAS TASKED ME TO BRING THE FEATHERS BACK *INTACT*.
AND ONCE SCORIA'S PASSION IS *SPENT*, I HOPE TO FIND HIM MORE... TRACTABLE.
SO I *THANK* YOU FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION, BUT I DECLINE.
MORE TRACTABLE? YOU *THINK* SO?
VERY WELL, SUSANO-O-NO-MIKOTO.
REMEMBER THAT I *OFFERED*.

I CALL UPON LUCIFER MORNINGSTAR.
FOR THE *THIRD* TIME, WILL HE RESPOND TO THE CHALLENGE?
THEN IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE LAWS OF EFFRUL, I PROCLAIM HIM *RENEGADE* TO HIS OATH.
THE DUEL AND HIS LIFE ARE *FORFEIT*. HIS PRESENCE ANATHEMA THROUGHOUT THESE--
LUCIFER MORNINGSTAR SPEAKS FOR *HIMSELF*.

I am sorry to have delayed you, Lord Arux.
Shall we *begin?*

A hush fell upon the crowd, then.
For they had seen their champion for the first time, and they were dismayed.
THE COMBATANTS MUST BE *SEARCHED* BEFORE THEY ENTER THE ARENA.
LOOK TO THE LORD *LUCIFER.*
RUDD STOLE A LITTLE OF HIS FLESH, OR BLOOD. IT WILL *POINT* TO HIM LIKE A LODESTONE.
THE REST IS *YOUR* AFFAIR.
TAKE YOUR *PLACES.* LUCIFER TO THE NORTH AND AMENADIEL TO THE SOUTH.
YOU MAY ENTER THE DUELING GROUNDS WHEN THE *HORNS* HAVE SOUNDED THRICE.
A FOOL MIGHT UNDERESTIMATE YOU, LIGHTBRINGER, AND DRAW THIS OUT FOR THE SHEER *PLEASURE* OF IT.
BUT I AM *NOT* A FOOL.

A single combat? Nobody present believed that lie. The fate of Effrul was at stake in this.
And all our separate, several fates besides.
THERE HAS BEEN FOUL DEALING HERE. SOMEONE HAS *WROUGHT* ON HIM WITH MAGICS.
PERHAPS. BUT HE MADE NO *PROTEST.* IT'S NOT WITHIN OUR *REMIT* TO INVESTIGATE.
IF YOU HAVE PLAYED HIM *FALSELY,* ARUX--IF YOU ARE IN THE PAY OF HEAVEN--
--YAHWEH HIMSELF WOULD BE HARD PUT TO KEEP YOUR *HEAD* UPON YOUR NECK.
The horns sounded.
The duel began.

INFERNO

PART 4 of 4

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The combatants entered the valley from two separate points, twenty leagues apart.
It was the rule and the custom for contests of this kind.
At another time, in other circumstances, this would have provided the thrill of a chase.
But the angel, Amenadiel, stooped over the dueling ground like an armored hawk.
And delay suited neither his purpose nor mine.
Not at all.
No foreplay, this time.
No honing of the pleasure through the exquisite agony of anticipation and delay.
Just the climax.
Which was always the point, after all.

LOOK UPON ME, MAZIKEEN.
I HAVE WASHED IN THE BLOOD OF WILLING SACRIFICES, AND CLOTHED MYSELF IN THE RAIMENT OF THE SUN.
LOOK UPON YOUR HUSBAND IN THE FULLNESS OF HIS PERFECTION.
SCORIA, I AM WAR LEADER OF THE LILIM. YOU ACT AGAINST YOUR WHOLE RACE NOW.
BUT GIVE ME SUSANO, AND YOU MAY YET LIVE.
I MAY YET LIVE? YOU SPEAK BLASPHEMY, MAZIKEEN.
LIFE IS MY GIFT.
AND I WILL PLANT LIFE IN YOUR BODY NOW.
MY FIRST MIRACLE WILL BE A HUMBLE, MUNDANE ONE.

The storm god Susano-O-No-Mikoto looked away fastidiously.
These events had no bearing on his errand, the burden he carried, or his vengeance against the Morningstar.
His hands were almost able to meet around the girth of the pillar. He continued to unwind his bandages.
I WILL NOT *SUBMIT* TO YOUR EMBRACE.
IT IS TOO GREAT AN *HONOR* FOR YOU, WHORE.
BUT THERE ARE NO *OTHER* VESSELS HERE THAT WILL SERVE.

Between the prayer and the headman's stroke falls the shadow.
Between the blind instinct and the uncertain act.
Between the hope of salvation--
--and the hungry dust.
LOOK. IT WAS THIS. A LITTLE OF *YOU*, IN A SILVER BOX, CHARMED SO THAT IT WOULD PULL TOWARDS ITS SOURCE.
THE MAN *RUDD* BETRAYED YOU.
YOU HAVE NOT INSPIRED *LOYALTY*, MORNINGSTAR.
YOU HAVE NOT INSPIRED LOVE.

I...never *asked* for either.
BUT WHAT ELSE HAVE WE *LIVED* BY, AFTER ALL?
WHERE ELSE IS OUR LEGACY TO BE FOUND?
YOU CHOOSE TO LIVE *ALONE*--
--TO *REJECT* ALL OPINIONS, ALL REALITIES, BUT YOUR OWN.
SO YOU HAVE NOT LIVED AT ALL. AND THIS IS NOT *DEATH*--
--BUT THE *CONFIRMATION* OF DEATH.

HOLD FAST TO HIS *WINDPIPE*. DON'T LET HIM SPEAK.
BECAUSE I'M A *WOMAN*, MY FATHER WOULD NOT TEACH ME RUHOK.
BUT HE *SPOKE* IT OFTEN ENOUGH, SCORIA. AND I LISTENED.

HERE IS YOUR APOTHEOSIS, HUSBAND.
YOU'VE EARNED IT.
KLUDKLUDKLUDKLUDKLUDKLUD
The pistoning motion of her arm was hypnotic.
Susano tore his eyes from it with difficulty.
Under the bandages his hands were seared bone, moved only by his divine will.
And she was too deeply involved in her catharsis to see him so.

TWO OF YOU--BURN IT.
THE REST, BAR THE DOORS.
AND STAND GUARD OVER THEM.
Her loss of control filled her with shame.
It had cost her a minute. Perhaps longer. It had allowed her true quarry to slip away.
She had to believe that that minute would make no difference in the end.
She had to believe that there was still time.

ALL I KNOW OF *JOY* HAS ITS SOURCE AND ITS FRUITION IN THIS MOMENT.
YOU HAVE GIVEN ME BACK MY LIFE, LUCIFER. I MUST *LOVE* YOU FOR THAT.

NO.
NO.
THE--THE HEART--
I RETURN IT TO YOU FREELY. IT BELONGED TO YOUR *ASSASSIN.*
AND THE TOXIC *CHERUB* I BOUND INSIDE IT. THAT WAS *ALSO* YOURS, I THINK.
NO. IT WAS REMIEL'S. AAAAARH!
THIS IS -- WHAT IT FELT LIKE THEN? I CANNOT MOVE...
YOU WON'T BE *NEEDING* TO.

BUT YOU BROKE THE CODE DUELLO. *YOU* WILL DIE, TOO.
POSSIBLY. HOLD *STILL*, AMENADIEL.
THIS WILL PLAY BETTER IN THE BACK SEATS IF I DO IT IN *ONE* STROKE.
RULES ARE *RULES*.
A *MALEDICTION* ON YOU, LUCIFER!
MAY YOU *ROT* BY INCHES AND OUNCES. MAY YOU --
LUCIFER!
LORD LUCIFER!
EFFRUL FOR LUCIFER!

EXCELLENT! STAND *FORWARD,* ARUX, AND PROCLAIM HIM VICTOR.
IT'S YOUR *PRIVILEGE.*
No.
The privilege is *mine.*
No one here is to move from his *place.* Secure the dueling ground, Lord Arux.
And have *Lucifer* brought to me.

At this point we enter the intricacies of endgame.
Susano-O-No-Mikoto fled through the labyrinth of Scoria's tower. Always upwards.
With the doors barred, the roof offered the only hope of escape.
But the tower stood at the center of a lake of fire, and his ruined hands would not permit him to climb.
SUSANO.
GIVE ME THE *FEATHERS.*
LUCIFER KILLED MY *BROTHERS,* DEMON. TREACHEROUSLY, AND IN OUR OWN HOUSE WHERE HE WAS A *GUEST.*
I FEAR *NOTHING* NOW EXCEPT FAILURE IN THIS ENTERPRISE.
YOU WILL HAVE TO *FIND* THE FEATHERS ABOUT MY PERSON.
I HOPE AND TRUST THAT THIS WILL TAKE *LONGER* THAN YOU HAVE.

It appears that there has been an *irregularity* in this contest, Lucifer Morningstar.
Has there? Not on *my* part.
HE'S *WON*, ANGEL!
HE'S WON BY *OUR* RULES!
Ah, but I fear he has *not.*
His heart was not *present* in the arena.
This is a *breach* of the code duello, and his life is forfeit.
So we're playing by the book. Good.
I read it too. Look.

I gave my heart to *amenadiel.*
and *he* brought it to the dueling ground for me.
I offered you your *life* a while ago.
You *refused* it.
How could this have *happened?*
I--I cannot *say!*
By *treachery,* my lord.
I offered this box to Lord *Arux* as a charm to find Lord Lucifer in the arena.
And he passed it on to Amenadiel under pretext of *searching* him.

YOU MANIPULATED ME. INTENTIONALLY!
AYE, MY LORD. TO PREVENT A GREATER INJUSTICE.
Nonetheless. Lucifer's heart was not in his own chest.
A case could still be made--
YOU'D HAVE ME EXECUTED ON A TECHNICALITY.
It is a matter of the code, Morningstar.
You understand the importance of obedience.

WELL.
IT SEEMS YOU'LL HAVE TO FIND SOME *OTHER* SOLUTION TO YOUR DILEMMA.
As I was about to say. Guards, take Lord *Arux* into custody--
--For treasonous *subversion* of the code duello.

There remains but little to say.
And all of it hard.
You have treated me with kindness, I know. And I have repaid it badly.
However hypocritical it sounds, I beg your forgiveness.
The truth is that I have a plan. A grand design.
The patronage of Lucifer Morningstar moves me forward in that design.
He nominated Lys as your successor, as he had agreed to do when she came to warn us against you.
Most, if not all, of your household have stayed on and pledged their service to her.
It was my mediation that saved you from a death sentence. I am aware that you will hardly thank me for that.
And neither will she, of course.
Neither will she.
But sometimes one tries to balance a great sin--
--with a thousand inadequate charities.

THERE ARE *TWO* OF US NOW.
TWO WHO HAVE DEFIED OUR FATHER'S *WILL*.
I WAS PERFECTLY *COMFORTABLE* STANDING ALONE, OF COURSE. BUT STILL, THAT *PLEASES* ME MORE THAN I'D HAVE EXPECTED.
THREE OF US?
WELL, I'VE BEEN OUT OF *TOUCH* FOR A WHILE, DUMA, AND THINGS ARE CHANGING *FAST* NOW.
"I WONDER IF HE'S BEGUN TO BE *AFRAID* YET."

SO THERE IS A STORY ABOUT A MAN. A MAN IN A WESTERN CITY.
NOT HIS BIRTHPLACE, BUT STILL, HIS HOME.
HE WAS A MAN WHO BELIEVED IN A BOOK, AND TRIED TO LIVE BY ITS WORDS.
THE WORDS WERE ABOUT THE WAY GOD WANTS PEOPLE TO LIVE.
GOOD EVENING, CORA. TODAY IS PASTRAMI.
THANK YOU, MR. AL-DABAGH. YOU CAN PUT THIS ON MY TAB.
AND THE MAN STAYED AS CLOSE TO THOSE WORDS AS HE COULD.
BACK IN 5 MINS
BUT HE WAS AWARE THAT THERE WERE OTHER WAYS TO LIVE.
HE HAD SEEN SUCCESS, RICHES, ALL EARTHLY REWARDS SHOWERED ON THOSE WHO WERE NOT RIGHTEOUS, AND THIS OPPRESSED HIM GREATLY.
$1.99
LIKE ALL MEN WHO TRY HARD TO BE GOOD, HE OCCASIONALLY WISHED THAT THE PUNISHMENT OF SIN COULD BE MORE NOTICEABLE.
AND THE REWARD OF VIRTUE NOT SO VERY LONG POSTPONED.
Dear Mr. Al-Dabagh,
It is with great regret that we have to i you that the results s (attached) e. The tests of hrough 13

BEARING GIFTS

MIKE CAREY writer **DEAN ORMSTON** art
COMICRAFT letters
DANIEL VOZZO colors & separations
CHRISTOPHER MOELLER cover painter
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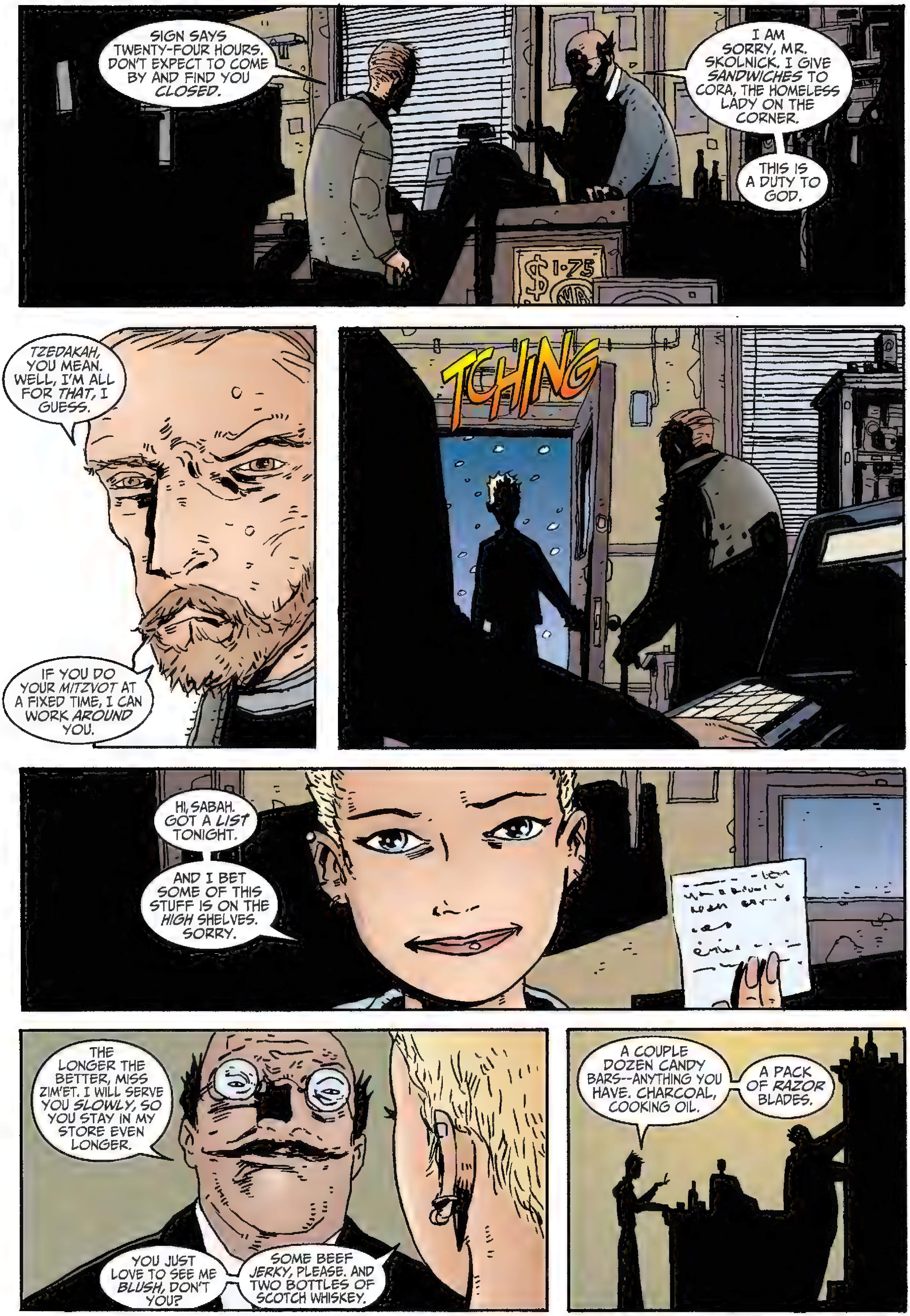
SIGN SAYS TWENTY-FOUR HOURS. DON'T EXPECT TO COME BY AND FIND YOU *CLOSED.*
I AM SORRY, MR. SKOLNICK. I GIVE *SANDWICHES* TO CORA, THE HOMELESS LADY ON THE CORNER.
THIS IS A DUTY TO GOD.
$1.75
TZEDAKAH, YOU MEAN. WELL, I'M ALL FOR *THAT,* I GUESS.
IF YOU DO YOUR *MITZVOT* AT A FIXED TIME, I CAN WORK *AROUND* YOU.
TCHING
HI, SABAH. GOT A *LIST* TONIGHT.
AND I BET SOME OF THIS STUFF IS ON THE *HIGH* SHELVES. SORRY.
THE LONGER THE BETTER, MISS ZIM'ET. I WILL SERVE YOU *SLOWLY,* SO YOU STAY IN MY STORE EVEN LONGER.
YOU JUST LOVE TO SEE ME *BLUSH,* DON'T YOU?
SOME BEEF *JERKY,* PLEASE. AND TWO BOTTLES OF SCOTCH WHISKEY.
A COUPLE DOZEN CANDY BARS--ANYTHING YOU HAVE. CHARCOAL, COOKING OIL.
A PACK OF *RAZOR* BLADES.

WHISKEY? AND CANDY? YOU ARE HAVING PERHAPS A *PARTY*, MISS ZIM'ET?
I HAVE NOT KNOWN YOU TO *BUY* THESE THINGS BEFORE.
THEY'RE FOR MY *SISTER*. THE ONE WHO'S PREGNANT.
SHE'S STARTING TO HAVE *CRAVINGS*. YOU KNOW.
YES, WITH MY WIFE IT WAS *PICKLES*. AND MOUTHWASH.
THE MOUTHWASH WAS *FORTUNATE* FOR ME, I THINK.
$2.9
$7.0
BEE
HEY. CAN WE GET SOME *SERVICE?*
CERTAINLY YOU CAN.
ONCE I HAVE FINISHED THE *LADY'S* ORDER.
WE'RE IN A *HURRY*. EMPTY THE REGISTER--
--BEFORE I PEEL YOUR FUCKING *FACE* OFF.

PLEASE. THERE IS NOT *MUCH,* BUT TAKE IT.
KEEP THOSE HANDS RIGHT WHERE I CAN *SEE* THEM, MOTHERFUCKER.
WHAT THE FUCK ARE *YOU* LOOKIN' AT, BITCH?
YOU WANNA SUCK MY *GLOCK?*
YEAH, YEAH! MAKE HER *SUCK* IT!
SABAH.
FARME TOUS OEUX.
I DON'T *LIKE* THAT FUCKIN' FOREIGN DOUBLETALK.
NOW OPEN YOUR FUCKIN'--

IF THE MAN HAD A FAULT, IT WAS COWARDICE.
IN THE THROAT-SPOKEN FRENCH OF HIS NATIVE GABON, SHE HAD TOLD HIM TO COVER HIS EYES. SO HE DID.
HE HEARD SOUNDS, BUT THEY WERE MUFFLED AND UNCLEAR.
A CHOKED CRY. A SIGH LIKE TEARING CLOTH.
A HEAVY, LIQUID IMPACT. A METALLIC PERCUSSION.
A SINGLE SYLLABLE, WHISPERED IN A WAVERING VOICE.
AND THEN, FINALLY--
--SILENCE.
MISS ZIM'ET! WHAT HAPPENED?
THEY HEARD A SIREN AND RAN AWAY. COULD YOU FILL MY ORDER, PLEASE, SABAH?
I DON'T LIKE TO LEAVE MY SISTER ALONE TOO LONG.

LATER, WHEN SHE HAD GONE, HE THOUGHT ABOUT CALLING THE POLICE. BUT NOTHING HAD BEEN STOLEN.
WHAT WOULD THE POLICE DO BESIDES SCARE AWAY MORE CUSTOMERS?
THERE WAS A SECURITY CAMERA IN THE SHOP WHOSE WORKINGS HE BARELY UNDERSTOOD.
HE SUCCEEDED IN MAKING IT PLAYBACK.
HE SAW MISS ZIM'ET THREATENED BY THE GUN. THE MUZZLE PRESSED AGAINST HER FACE.
HE EXPECTED HER TO LEAN BACK AWAY FROM IT, BUT SHE DIDN'T. HE SAW HER LIPS PART.
BUT THEN THE CAMERA MALFUNCTIONED.
STILL, THERE WERE SHAPES WITHIN THE SWIRLING DARKNESS. PERHAPS IF HE INCREASED THE BRIGHTNESS--
SABAH.
AAAAAA!

MISS ZIM'ET. YOU CAME BACK!
YES. MY SISTER IS COMING TO *TERM*, BUT SHE'S IN A LOT OF PAIN.
I NEED YOUR *HELP*.
MY HELP? I KNOW *NOTHING* ABOUT THESE THINGS.
SHE MUST GO TO A HOSPITAL AND THE *DOCTORS* WILL BRING OUT THE BABY.
AN EPIDURAL'S NOT GOING TO CUT IT, SABAH.
I NEED YOU TO *SWEAR* INTO THIS SKIN BAG. ALL THE CURSE WORDS YOU KNOW.
SWEAR?
SWEAR.
BUT... MISS ZIM'ET, IN FRONT OF A *WOMAN*...
OH. OKAY. I'LL GO IN THE *BACK* HERE.
JUST CURSE WORDS, THOUGH. IN ANY LANGUAGE. AND NOTHING YOU THINK YOU MIGHT *NEED* AGAIN.

NOT *MANY* OF THE CHERUBIM FELL. YOU'RE PROBABLY GAUDIUM.
HEH. YEAH. GOOD CALL.
WE MET, *RIGHT?* IN THE PAIN REALMS?
FRIEDA
WAL
SOOOO, DON'T TAKE THIS THE WRONG *WAY*--
--BUT HAVE YOU *FED* TONIGHT?
I'M *STUFFED*, THANKS FOR ASKING. WHAT ABOUT YOU?
AND WHO EATS BABY *SWEETCORN?*
WELL, IN ACTUAL FACT, THE ARCHANGEL *MICHAEL*.
FIZZ SODA
EARLS WHITE FLOUR
BABY SWEET
IT'S A VERY LONG STORY.
MISS ZIM'ET!
I'VE FINISHED.

WELL, SEE YOU AROUND.
YEAH. SURE.
I DO NOT KNOW *MANY* BAD WORDS, BUT I CALLED MY BROTHER WHO DRIVES A TAXI.
THERE ARE *PLENTY* IN THERE NOW.
THANKS, SABAH.
LET ME ASK YOU SOMETHING. YOU'RE SEEING ME AS A TALL *HISPANIC* GUY, RIGHT?
YES.
WELL THANK *FUCK* FOR THAT.
WOW CHIPS
GOTTA GO.
CARROTS DON'T PEEL *THEMSELVES*.

THERE WERE SOME BOXES TO TAKE OUT TO THE DUMPSTER.
NORMALLY HE ONLY OPENED THE BACK DOOR IN DAYLIGHT, BUT TONIGHT HE FELT THE NEED FOR SOME COOL AIR ON HIS FACE.
HE THREW THE LETTER FROM THE HOSPITAL AWAY, TOO.
HE'D TELL HIS WIFE IN HIS OWN WORDS HOW LONG HE HAD TO SPEND WITH HER.
HIS LYMPH SYSTEM WAS INFECTED, THE LETTER SAID.
THEY COULD REMOVE THE ORIGINAL CANCER, BUT IT WOULDN'T DO ANY GOOD. HE'D DIE ANYWAY.
ON AN IMPULSE HE TRIED TO CURSE. BUT THE WORDS HAD GONE FROM HIS MOUTH AND HIS MIND.
THE ONLY ONE HE HAD LEFT WAS "BLOODY."
SO HE REPEATED "BLOODY" LIKE A MANTRA, AND HE SMOKED A SECOND CIGARETTE.
SMOKE DEVILS DANCED AROUND HIM IN THE SODIUM GLARE OF A SECURITY LIGHT.
AND AT MIDNIGHT--
--SHE RETURNED FOR THE FINAL TIME.

SABAH.
IT'S GOING TO BE A *DIFFICULT* BIRTH. I WANT YOU TO COME WITH ME.
HE WAS A COWARD. BUT HE WAS ALSO A MAN WHO TRIED HARD TO DO GOOD.
TO COME *WHERE,* MISS ZIM'ET?
AND PERHAPS ON SOME LEVEL HE THOUGHT--MISTAKENLY--THAT HE HAD NOTHING LEFT TO LOSE.
TO THE PLACE WHERE I *LIVE.*
IT'S NOT FAR.
BUT THE SHOP--
YOU LOCK THE DOOR AND PUT THE *SIGN* UP. THE SHOP WILL BE FINE.
MISS ZIM'ET, I AM NOT A DOCTOR. YOU REALLY THINK I CAN *HELP*?
OH YES.

HE FOLLOWED HER THROUGH THE DARKENED STREETS OF THE CITY.
HIS HOME YES--BUT IN THE WAKE OF HER SILENT FOOTSTEPS IT SEEMED A PLACE WHERE HE HAD NEVER TROD.
WHAT IS THE PROBLEM, MISS ZIM'ET?
WITH THE *BIRTH?*
THE BABY WON'T *COME.* AND IT'S BEEN TOO LONG.
HE WANTED TO ASK HOW LONG.
BUT THE VASTNESS OF THE NIGHT WAS SITTING ON HIM LIKE A WEIGHT, AND HE SAID NOTHING.
THIS IS THE CINEMA THAT BURNED DOWN.
DON'T WORRY. THIS ISN'T WHERE WE *LIVE.*
IT'S JUST OUR FRONT *DOOR.*

MISS ZIM'ET--
THIS...THIS *PLACE* WE ARE GOING TO--
YOU'RE WITH *ME*, SABAH. BELIEVE ME, NOTHING'S GOING TO TOUCH YOU.
BUT IT'S PROBABLY BEST IF YOU DON'T LET GO OF MY *HAND*.

WE SHOULD WALK QUICKLY.
SHE'S HURTING, AND SHE'S *LONELY*. I SHOULDN'T HAVE LEFT HER FOR SO LONG.
WHO IS YOUR *FRIEND,* ZIME'ETNU?
AREN'T YOU GOING TO *INTRODUCE* ME?
AS YOU KNOW, MY *DIET* IS VERY SPECIALIZED.
YOU'D SCARCELY NOTICE I'D *FED.*

GOD IS JUST. HE DOES NOT SEND TO HELL THOSE WHO DON'T DESERVE IT.
SO THE ONLY PRAYER THAT CAME TO THE MAN WAS "TO HIS WILL I SUBMIT."
HE IS MY SISTER'S.
TOUCH HIM, CRUS, AND THE ONLY *TEARS* YOU'LL BE DRINKING WILL BE YOUR OWN.
I ASK NO MORE THAN IS MY *RIGHT.*
LUCIFER *GAVE* US NO RIGHTS. ONLY THIS ISLAND.
IF YOU THINK YOU CAN TAKE HIM *FROM* ME, DO SO.
HIS TEARS WOULD BE THIN AND *TASTELESS* IN ANY EVENT.
I DOUBT HE HAS THE *CAPACITY* TO SUFFER MUCH.

GET UP, SABAH. WE'RE ALMOST THERE.
MISS ZIM'ET, I BEG YOU!
IF THERE IS A CHANCE FOR ME TO BE *SAVED*, TELL ME! I WILL DO *ANYTHING!*
THESE ARE THE *DEVIL'S* LANDS, AND SALVATION ISN'T MUCH OF AN ISSUE HERE.
IF YOU DON'T WALK, I'LL HAVE TO *CARRY* YOU.
SHE TOOK HIS HAND AGAIN, AND DREW HIM TO HIS FEET. HE NOTICED FOR THE FIRST TIME HOW STRONG HER GRIP WAS.
TOO STRONG FOR HIM TO BREAK.
THERE WERE SOUNDS ON THE WIND LIKE PLEADING VOICES, IN NO LANGUAGE HE KNEW.
SMELLS OF PERFUME AND CARRION, EACH TOO STRONG FOR THE OTHER TO DROWN IT OUT.
AND IN THE FULLNESS OF TIME--
--THEY CAME TO A CAVE.

FROM INSIDE THERE WAS THE SOUND OF SOMETHING HUGE, THRASHING IN AGONY.
MERCIFULLY, IT WAS TOO DARK FOR HIM TO SEE.
STAY HERE.
SAID THE WOMAN. OR THE THING THAT WORE A WOMAN'S SHAPE.
AND SHE WENT INSIDE.
"TO HIS WILL I SUBMIT. TO HIS WILL I SUBMIT. TO HIS WILL I SUBMIT." AGAIN AND AGAIN HE PRAYED, TRYING TO MEAN IT.
TRYING TO FIND A CORNER IN HIS TERROR TO REBUILD HIS DEVOTION ON.
AND THEN SHE CAME UNTO HIM AGAIN.
SABAH.
THE BABY IS TRAPPED BETWEEN BEING AND NOT-BEING.
THE SPIRITS OF THIS PLACE DEMAND AN OFFERING. I HOPE YOU UNDERSTAND.

BUT I...I HAVE NOT STOLEN, OR LIED, OR *KILLED* ANYONE!
I HAVE NOT *DESERVED* THIS!
AND THAT'S ABOUT AS RELEVANT AS *SALVATION* IS.
AN OFFERING, SABAH. WHAT WILL YOU *GIVE* THEM SO THEY WILL LET MY NEPHEW BE BORN?
I HAVE *NOTHING!* NOTHING TO OFFER!
MY RIGHT HAND? MY LEGS? THE SIGHT FROM MY *EYES?*
IF I *DIE* HERE, MY WIFE WILL NEVER KNOW.
TAKE ANYTHING, ZIM'ET, BUT LET ME *LIVE* ONE MORE DAY. ONE MORE DAY.
LOOK AROUND YOU, SABAH. REMEMBER THE CURSE WORDS.
WHAT DO YOU THINK THE SPIRITS *DELIGHT* IN?
STOP FUCKING AROUND AND OFFER THEM SOMETHING THEY'LL *REALLY* WANT.

MY--
--MY TUMOR?
THANK YOU, SABAH.
THAT WILL MAKE A *LOVELY* OFFERING.
AND THE THING THAT LIVED IN THE CAVE REACHED INTO HIM WITH A TOUCH SO GENTLE IT REMINDED HIM OF HIS WIFE'S TOUCH.
INTO HIM AND THROUGH HIM AND AROUND HIS LIVER, HIS SPLEEN, HIS LUNGS.
WITHDRAWING AT LAST WITH A HANDFUL OF GRAINY DARKNESS, LIKE THE SHADOW OF A SOUL.

ZIM'ET WENT AGAIN INTO THE CAVE, AND AFTER A TIME HE HEARD A CRY. THE CRY OF A NEWBORN CHILD.
IN SPITE OF HIMSELF HE CRAWLED TO THE THRESHOLD.
IT WAS HIDEOUS BEYOND IMAGINING. BUT IN A HOARSE VOICE HE BLESSED IT.
ITS MOTHER, ALTHOUGH SHE HAD NO FACE AS SUCH, SMILED BACK AT HIM.
OTHERS CAME THEN, BEARING GIFTS OF THEIR OWN. HE WAS INTRODUCED TO THEM, BUT MERCIFUL SHADOW HAD FALLEN ACROSS HIS SIGHT.
HE DIDN'T TRULY SEE THEM.
AFTERWARDS SHE TOOK HIM BACK TO THE GATE.
THE WIND HAD FALLEN. THE WHOLE WORLD WAS BENT IN REVERENT SILENCE.
TWO THOUSAND YEARS.
SHE SAID.
A VERY LONG TIME, EVEN FOR MY FAMILY. GOODBYE, SABAH.
WHEN I CHOOSE TO HAVE A CHILD OF MY OWN, I'LL COME TO YOU. BUT LATE AT NIGHT.
I WON'T WAKE YOU.

THE MAN WENT HOME.
ÇA A ETAIT TRANQUI, LA NUIT Y LA?
YES. A QUIET NIGHT.
COMME TOUJOURS.
THE SAME AS ALWAYS.
HIS HEART SWELLED WITH LOVE FOR HER.
WITH THE SUDDEN DIZZYING LIGHTNESS THAT COMES WHEN YOU PUT A BURDEN DOWN AFTER CARRYING IT A GREAT WAY.
AND THE SUN CAME UP.
AND THE WORLD BEGAN AGAIN.

REST IN PEACE
ELAINE

THE MURDERED GIRL--
--WHICHEVER SIDE YOU APPROACH HER FROM-- LEADS NOWHERE.
A MODEL STUDENT. KEEN. INTELLIGENT. SENSIBLE.
TWELVE GOING ON FORTY, HER TEACHER SAID.
BUT WHERE IS SHE FROM, REALLY? AND WHAT WAS THIS BUSINESS WITH THE AMERICAN WHO CLAIMED TO BE HER FATHER?
PASSEPORT
PASAPORTE
NO ADOPTION RECORDS. NO WITNESSES.
NOWHERE OBVIOUS TO START DIGGING.
THERE WAS THE BEST FRIEND, MONA DOYLE. SHE ALSO DIED IN ODD CIRCUMSTANCES.
A POSSIBLE CONNECTION?
AND TWO OTHER CLASSMATES ATTACKED, MORE RECENTLY.
YES. THERE MAY BE SOMETHING IN THAT. SOME THREAD A LITTLE THICKER THAN COINCIDENCE.
BUT THE GIRL HERSELF? SHE WAS A PERFECT LITTLE ANGEL.
AND ANGELS NEVER GIVE YOU VERY MUCH TO GO ON.

WHICH IS WHY I'M *HERE* TODAY.
LOOKING FOR *DEVILS.*
COME TO JUDGMENT
PART ONE OF TWO
Based on characters created by GAIMAN, KIETH & DRINGENBERG
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DANIEL VOZZO colors & separations
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IN MEM
THE PRIEST TAKES HIS TEXT FROM MARK 10:14. *"SUFFER THE LITTLE CHILDREN TO COME UNTO ME."*
THE *DEFAULT* OPTION.

THE MAN WITH THE SCARRED FOREHEAD. I'M SURE I KNOW HIM.
NOT FAMILY. HARDLY FRIEND. HIS COUNTENANCE BESPEAKS SOMETHING LIKE GUILT.
HE SPEAKS TO THE TALL MAN. BRIEFLY.
THE UGLY CHILDREN FRET AND FIGHT. THEY HAVE NOTHING OF THE FAVOR OF THEIR FATHER.
WHEN THEY'VE GONE I COME OUT OF HIDING.
MY DUTY IS TO THAT WHICH DOES NOT DIE, BUT STILL--
--I FEEL I OWE HER THIS, AT LEAST.
BEFORE GOD, I WILL SEE JUSTICE DONE ON HIM THAT KILLED THEE.
OR PASS MYSELF BEYOND THE GATES OF THE WORLD.
THESE PLACES ANGER ME. SO MANY CROSSES.
SO LITTLE REAL BELIEF.

THE FIORENZE HOTEL, LAS VEGAS.
JEEEEESUS!
THIS IS ALL STILL *HERE?*
WHAT'S THE *MATTER* WITH YOU PEOPLE?
MISS PRESTO, I'M REALLY *SORRY.* WE DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO DO.
WHEN YOU MISSED THE SECOND SET LAST NIGHT, THE MANAGER CAME TO *LOOK* FOR YOU.
HE CALLED THE *POLICE* AND THEY SAID TO LEAVE IT UNTIL--
WHOA! LAST *NIGHT?*
THAT ALL HAPPENED IN ONE *NIGHT?* SETTING FIRE TO THE WORLD, AND THE *ORGY,* AND ALL THE REST OF IT?
IT'S JUST LIKE THE FUCKING CHRISTMAS *CAROL.*

UMM... I'M SORRY, I NEVER SAW THAT MOVIE.
ANYWAY, THE POLICE SAID THEY WANT TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT A MISSING PERSON. A MR. EDDIE BRAKE?
EDDIE'S STILL MISSING? OF COURSE HE IS. IT'S ONLY BEEN A DAY.
THAT PART'S GOOD. GO ON.
WELL, THAT'S IT REALLY. AND THE MANAGER WANTS TO SEE YOU ABOUT LAST NIGHT.
SHALL I TAKE YOUR COAT?
NO!
I'LL TALK TO THE MANAGER AND THE POLICE AFTER I'VE SLEPT--
--IN A SUITE THAT DOESN'T SMELL LIKE A JACKAL'S ARMPIT. OH, AND HEY--
--A BLOND GUY IS GONNA COME BY--WITH TWO LITTLE CURLS LIKE HORNS IN HIS HAIR.
JUST SEND HIM ON UP.

YES, VERY *PRETTY*. BUT IF YOU'LL EXCUSE THE CLICHÉ--
SOLOMON DOUID
DETECTIVE INSPECTO
--OVER MY DEAD *BODY*.
INSPECTOR DONOGHUE, YOUR SUPERIORS HAVE ALREADY *AUTHORIZED* THIS. THE CASE IS MINE.
IT SODDING WELL IS *NOT*.
NOT UNTIL I SIGN IT *OFF* TO YOU.
I DON'T CARE IF GOD AND ALL HIS BLOODY *SAINTS* HAVE SEEN FIT TO KISS YOUR ARSE.
WHAT *ARE* YOU, ANYWAY? WHICH JURISDICTION? YOU'RE JUST A BLOODY *NAME*.
THWICK
IF I WERE TO *KILL* YOU NOW--HERE IN YOUR OWN OFFICE--
--IT WOULD NEVER BE *UTTERED*, MY NAME. OR *WRITTEN* IN ANY REPORT.
YES. I AM JUST A NAME.
BUT KEEP THIS IN MIND.
YOU UNDERSTAND?

IS THERE ANY POINT IN ASKING *WHY* YOU'RE TAKING THIS CASE?
I HAVE ***DREAMED*** OF HER.
THAT IS HOW GOD TELLS ME WHAT MY *DUTY* IS.
YOU'LL FIND THE FAMILY ODD. THEY'RE DEFINITELY *HIDING* SOMETHING.
AND THAT WAS HARDLY AN *ANSWER*.
WHEREVER I HAVE SEEN *INNOCENCE* DEFILED OR DESTROYED I HAVE COME IN JUDGMENT--EVEN AGAINST MY OWN FATHER.
AND YOUR SUMMARY OF THIS CASE AMOUNTED TO *NINE* WORDS.
PERHAPS I WILL RETURN TO JUDGE *YOU*, TOO.

Los Angeles.
As I swore, my lord, so have I done.
And here is the proof.
The proof I had in hell, Mazikeen.
You didn't go all that way to bring me back a paperweight.
No. But I have brought you back...other things.
Things of great value.
I don't doubt it.
And now that Meleos has approached my brother, there's a plan of my own that I can finally implement.
But it will keep.
For an hour or two.

YOU'RE GOING *AWAY* AGAIN.
YES. BUT NOT FAR.
AND NOT FOR *LONG?*
YOU'RE A *SOLDIER,* MAZIKEEN.
YOU *UNDERSTAND* HARDSHIP AND SACRIFICE.
I AM *YOUR* SOLDIER.
I KNOW.
STAND *EASY.*

KENSAL RISE, NORTH LONDON.
UNUSUAL, INSPECTOR?
IN WHAT WAY?
ANYTHING OUT OF HER NORMAL ROUTINE. IN THE DAYS BEFORE SHE DIED.
A NEW FRIEND OR INTEREST. A CHANGE IN MANNER OR SPEECH.
I DON'T THINK SO. I MEAN, THERE WAS THE NIGHT SHE WENT MISSING--
--BUT THAT WAS MONTHS AGO. BEFORE MATT'S HEART ATTACK.
THERE WASN'T ANYTHING.
WE'VE HAD EVERY BLOODY INSPECTOR UNDER THE SUN HERE ALREADY.
YOU'RE GOING OVER GROUND THAT'S BEEN COVERED TEN TIMES OVER.
WELL, IT MAY BE THAT A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE WILL YIELD SOME FRESH INSIGHT.
MRS. BELLOC, WILL YOU SHOW ME HER ROOM?
YES. OF COURSE.

YOUR HUSBAND IS A MAN OF STRONG *PASSIONS.*
I SUPPOSE HE *IS.* YES.
THIS IS ELAINE'S ROOM.
IF YOU DON'T *MIND,* INSPECTOR DOUID, I'LL WAIT DOWNSTAIRS.
IT'S-- VERY *HARD* FOR ME TO--
PLEASE, FEEL FREE. I'LL *CALL* YOU IF I NEED YOU.
YOU NEEDN'T *HIDE* FROM ME.
YOU, AT LEAST, ARE NOT A SUSPECT.

YOU CAN *SEE* ME?
IF YOU THOUGHT I COULD *NOT*, THERE WAS NO REASON TO STAY HIDDEN.
I'M DEAD. NO ONE *ELSE* COULD SEE ME, EXCEPT HER.
BUT YOU SEEMED TO BE *LOOKING* AT ME, AT THE CEMETERY. I WASN'T SURE.
YOU'RE EASTERMAN. THE MAN WHO CLAIMED TO BE HER *FATHER*.
I *AM* HER FATH--
--OKAY, NOT BIOLOGICALLY, BUT MY *WIFE* WAS HER MOTHER, SO I'M THE CLOSEST SHE HAD.
DO YOU KNOW WHAT *THIS* IS, MISTER EASTERMAN?
IT'S ELAINE'S GRANDMOTHERS. AN *ANGEL* DID THAT TO THEM.
WHO ARE YOU?
I AM *JUSTICE*.
BEGIN BY TELLING ME ABOUT THE *ANGEL*.

"YOU'RE GOING *AWAY* AGAIN."
"YES. BUT NOT FAR."
"AND NOT FOR *LONG?*"
"THERE IS A *CAVERN* AT THE HEART OF THE WORLD..."
"IS THERE?
"SOMETIMES. IT DEPENDS ON WHAT *MOOD* THE WORLD IS IN.
"IT IS GUARDED BY THE *SVARTALFA*-- THE DARK ELVES.
"PROBABLY ENOUGH TO DETER THE COMMON *RUCK* OF GODS AND MONSTERS.
"BUT TO BE HONEST, I ANTICIPATE NO REAL PROBLEMS AT THIS STAGE.
"WHICH IS *CONVENIENT.*
"IT MEANS I CAN CONSERVE MY *ENERGIES* UNTIL I GET TO THE BOTTOM."

GOOD DAY TO YOU, LOKI OF THE JÖTUN.
A GOOD DAY, LUCIFER MORNINGSTAR?
YES. I SUPPOSE IT IS.
NOW.

I HAVE OTHER AVENUES TO EXPLORE.
I COULD NOT EASILY SAY WHY I AM WAITING HERE.
THE DAY WEARS ON. OCCASIONALLY I SEE THEM MOVING INSIDE THE HOUSE.
THEY DO NOT SPEAK TO EACH OTHER. THEY DO NOT GO OUT.
TOWARDS EVENING, MATTHEW BELLOC COMES OUT INTO THE GARDEN.
THINKING HIMSELF UNOBSERVED, HE STANDS BEFORE A TREE, MOTIONLESS, FOR FIFTEEN MINUTES.
THEN PUNCHES IT. UNTIL HIS HANDS ARE BLOODIED.
HIS LIPS MOVE SOUNDLESSLY.
AN ENDLESS PROCESSION OF OBSCENITIES AND IMPRECATIONS.
THEN THERE IS NOTHING FOR AN HOUR OR MORE.
BUT AT SUNSET, JUST AS I AM ABOUT TO LEAVE--
--I AM FINALLY, AND MOST GENEROUSLY, REWARDED.

YOUR HUSBAND AND I HAVE BUSINESS TO DISCUSS IN PRIVATE.
YOU CAN WAIT OVER BY THE STEPS.
NO. I WILL NOT.
IF I REMOVE THE BOWL, THE VENOM WILL DRIP INTO HIS EYES.
THE PAIN IS TERRIBLE. YOU CANNOT ASK THIS OF ME.
OH YES.
THE VENOM.
OVER THERE. BY THE STEPS, WOMAN.
THIS WON'T TAKE LONG.

YOU KNOW WHY I'VE *COME*, LOKI.
I BELIEVE I CAN *GUESS*.
BUT WHAT CAN YOU GIVE ME IN *EXCHANGE?* THAT'S THE QUESTION.
I NEED THE SHIP FOR A SINGLE VOYAGE. *LEND* IT TO ME--
--AND I'LL COME BACK HERE ON THE DAY OF *RAGNAROK* AND FREE YOU.
AND CARRY ME UP ONTO THE *DECK?* AND HOLD ME HIGH SO I CAN SEE THE *DEATHS* OF THE AESIR?
YOU HAVE MY *WORD*.
GO TO MY BROTHER, WHO IS NAMED *BERGELMIR*.
TELL HIM I SWORE ON OUR FATHER'S *BONES* THAT YOU COULD HAVE THE SHIP.
THE ALL-FATHER IS GOING TO BE *HUGELY* PISSED OFF ABOUT HIS SNAKE, LIGHTBRINGER.
PROBABLY.
IF I WERE YOU, I'D KEEP *SCREAMING* FROM TIME TO TIME.
HE MAY NEVER NOTICE THE *DIFFERENCE*.

THE THING IS INSIDE THE *ROOM* FOR LESS THAN A MINUTE.
THEN IT *EMERGES* AGAIN, QUICK AND FURTIVE AND TENSE.
$#%@&%$*#!
I SURMISE THAT IT IS *UNUSED* TO STEALTH.
OR AT THE VERY LEAST THAT IT HAS FEW NATURAL *GIFTS* IN THAT REGARD.
TO PURSUE A FLYING QUARRY FROM THE *GROUND* IS NOT EASY.
BUT THE SYNCHRONICITIES *COMPEL* ME. THE ELEMENTS ARE COHERING AND I MUST FOLLOW.
WHAT *IS* THIS CREATURE? SO MAIMED IN ITS FORM, SO *DISSOLUTE* IN ITS MORALS?
SURELY IT BELONGS TO THE MOST *DEBASED* LEVELS OF GOD'S CREATION.
AND YET--
--IT POSSESSES A KIND OF BRUTE *CUNNING*.
I LET IT *SEE* ME. UNDERESTIMATED ITS ANIMAL INTELLIGENCE.
BUT GOD LIVES IN ALL THINGS. I TAKE MY LESSON *HUMBLY*, AND THANK HIM FOR IT.
SIT ON *THIS*, DICK TRACY.

HEY.
HEY YOURSELF.
WHAT *KEPT* YOU?
HOW ABOUT--IT'S THE OTHER SIDE OF THE FUCKING *WORLD*.
NO IT'S NOT. THAT WOULD BE MADAGASCAR.
WHATEVER. IT'S NOT LIKE I WAS TAKING IN THE *SIGHTS*.
WELL ANYWAY, YOU'D BETTER GO IN.
FOR THE LAST HOUR IT'S BEEN "IS HE *BACK* YET? IS HE *BACK* YET?"
THIS WHOLE SITUATION HAS GONE *SPECTACULARLY* TOO FAR.
YEAH. IF *YOU'RE* THE VOICE OF MODERATION, IT *MUST* HAVE.
OKAY, YOU CAN RELAX.
IT'S MISTER ILLEGAL *ENTRY*.

GAUDIUM! I AM RELIEVED TO SEE YOU.
YEAH. I'M SURE.
AND YOU WERE SUCCESSFUL?
IF YOU MEAN "HAVE YOU COME BACK WITH A BAGFUL OF CRABBY OLD LADIES"--
--THEN YEAH, I GUESS I DID OKAY.
I WILL TAKE THE JEWEL.
DOWN, ROVER.
YOU DON'T PAY MY WAGES.
YOU MAY GIVE THE BEAD TO MELEOS, GAUDIUM.
IT IS NECESSARY. LUCIFER CANNOT PROCEED WITHOUT IT.
WELL, SEE, I'VE BEEN MEANING TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT--
CRASH

NICE GOING, LITTLE BROTHER.
I THOUGHT I LOST THIS SCHMUCK.
NOBODY IN THIS ROOM MOVE.
I AM SOLOMON, THE SON OF DAVID. AND I AM INVESTIGATING A MURDER.

IN ALL THE WORLDS, IN ALL THE AGES OF MAN, THERE WAS *NOTHING* LIKE HER.
PRECIOUS *MONSTER.* ANGEL CHILD.
ALL INNOCENCE SHOULD BE PROTECTED.
ALL WHO *HARM* INNOCENTS SHOULD BE PUNISHED.
IN HER *DIARY* SHE WROTE *"SEE YOU SOON, MONA. LOVE AND KISSES."* HER HEART BOTH FULL AND EMPTY.
GOD LET ME *SEE* THIS. MADE ME *FEEL* IT.
IT IS WHILE I *SLEEP* THAT HE SHOWS ME MY DUTY.
AND THEN IN MY WAKING TIME I *CRAWL* AND *GROPE* MY WAY TOWARDS JUSTICE.
THE SERAPH, WHO COULD KILL ME WITH A GESTURE, CHOOSES INSTEAD TO *CONFESS.*
TELLS ME HOW THE *ASSASSIN* TORE HER BODY. HOW HIS SCHEMING TORE HER *SOUL.*
SOMETIMES THEY EQUATE CONFESSION WITH *ABSOLUTION.*
WHATEVER *THAT* MAY BE.
CELEBRITY SLEUTH
PET

WHAT THE FUCK ARE THEY *DOING* IN THERE? WASHING EACH OTHER'S HAIR?
YOU'RE GOING TO FIND OUT SOON *ENOUGH*, LITTLE BROTHER.
HE SAID YOU'RE *NEXT*.
OH YEAH? WELL HE CAN GO *SCREW* HIMSELF.
I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHY WE'RE GOING *ALONG* WITH THIS. WE SHOULD'VE JUST TOSSED HIM OUT THE WINDOW.
WHY *ARE* WE GOING WITH THIS, ARCHON?
BECAUSE SOLOMON BELIEVES HE SERVES MY FATHER, THE LORD OF HOSTS.
HIS PURSUIT OF JUSTICE IS AN **OFFERING**-- A PRAYER. I WOULD NOT WISH TO BELITTLE IT.
THE LORD OF HOSTS KICKED YOU *OUT*. GAVE YOU THE BUM'S RUSH.
YOU THINK PLAYING BALL WITH THIS PSYCHO IS GONNA BUY YOU SOME SORT OF REMISSION?
NO. BUT I DESERVED MY PUNISHMENT, GAUDIUM.
GROTESQUELY ENOUGH, WHAT HOPES I HAVE OF REDEMPTION NOW LIE IN MY BROTHER'S HANDS.

"So they are very slender hopes indeed."

COME TO JUDGMENT

PART TWO of TWO

MIKE CAREY writer **PETER GROSS & RYAN KELLY** artists **DANIEL VOZZO** colors & separations
COMICRAFT letters **CHRISTOPHER MOELLER** cover painter **MARIAH HUEHNER** assistant editor **SHELLY BOND** editor
Based on characters created by **GAIMAN, KIETH & DRINGENBERG**

THE STAR OF THE MORNING! *TCHAH!* IT'S A *BUG*.
BE *SILENT*, FOOL, AND LET HIM PASS.
I WILL NOT!
I'M LOOKING FOR *BERGELMIR*, BROTHER OF LOKI.
YOU'RE LOOKING FOR *DEATH*, LUCIFER. IN JOTUNHEIM, ONLY KIN OF THE *GIANTS* HAVE THE RIGHT TO--

KLUDD

THERE IS A *FOREST* A FEW LEAGUES HENCE, LORD. BERGELMIR HAS A CABIN THERE.
I HOPE YOU'LL BEAR NO *GRUDGE* OVER THE WORDS OF A FOOL.
A GRUDGE? NOT AT ALL. I'M *IMPRESSED*.
IF YOU'RE ALWAYS SO *QUICK* TO WEED STUPIDITY OUT OF THE GENE POOL--
--IT'S EASIER TO UNDERSTAND HOW *LOKI* HAPPENED.

HER BODYGUARD?
YEAH. LOOK, IF YOU'RE DEAF I CAN TALK IN SIGN LANGUAGE.
MICHAEL ASKED ME TO WATCH HER. KEEP HER OUT OF TROUBLE.
AND YET SHE DIED.
LOOK, THAT THING THEY SENT AFTER HER WAS A FRIGGIN' JIN EN MOK. IT GOT PAST ME WEARING HER FATHER'S FACE.
I WAS OUTGUNNED. THAT DOESN'T MEAN I DIDN'T TRY.
PERHAPS NOT. BUT YOU'RE A FALLEN CREATURE. DOUBTLESS IT COMES EASY FOR YOU TO FAIL AND THEN FORGIVE YOURSELF.
EAT SHIT, SHERLOCK!
WHO SET YOU UP AS JUDGE, JURY AND EXECUTIONER?
WHERE DID SHE GO?
WHAT?
THE CREATURE. THE JIN EN MOK.
WHEN THE FIGHT WAS OVER, WHERE DID SHE GO?
WELL, I-- I DUNNO. I DIDN'T SEE.
I GUESS SHE JUST--
I DUNNO.
AND HOW WOULD YOU RATE YOUR OWN PERFORMANCE AS A BODYGUARD?
MEASURED IN USELESS SACKS OF SHIT? A PERFECT TEN.
BUT CESTIS WAS ALL OVER ME. THERE WASN'T ANYTHING I COULD DO.
YOU SEE? YOU HAVE NO NEED OF A JUDGE OR A JURY.
AND AS AN EXECUTIONER I'M REQUIRED ELSEWHERE.
SLAM

I AM FINISHED HERE. *ALL* OF YOU ARE CULPABLE, OR COMPLICIT.
BUT THE *ULTIMATE* GUILT LIES ELSEWHERE.
THERE IS A **PARADOX** HERE, SULEIMAN BIN DAVID. WHATEVER YOU BELIEVE, GOD DID NOT SEND YOU ON THIS ERRAND.
HE **FORBADE** ME TO SAVE HER LIFE.
WHO IS FIT TO EXPOUND HIS WISDOM? NOT *YOU*, FIRST OF HEAVEN, AND NOT I.
IT IS A GLORY TO SERVE, AND A *SIN* TO ASK REASONS.
GET OUT THE *YELLOW PAGES*, SPERA. I'M GONNA SUE THAT GUY'S ASS INTO A GEOSTATIONARY *ORBIT*.
OH, AND SOMEONE SET THE *BATHROOM* ON FIRE.

JOTUNHEIM.
I'M LOOKING FOR BERGELMIR OF THE JOTUN.
IS HE *HERE?*
NO.
HE IS *GONE*, FAR AND WIDE.
A PITY. HIS BROTHER *LOKI* SENT ME TO SPEAK WITH HIM.
HIS *HALF-BROTHER*. LOKI HAS *AESIR* BLOOD IN HIM.
WOULD THAT I HAD A WET ENOUGH MOUTH TO *SPIT* WITH.

LOKI HAS OFFERED ME THE USE OF *NAGLFAR.*
HE SAID THAT BERGELMIR KNOWS WHERE TO *FIND* IT.
THE SHIP MADE FROM DEAD MEN'S FINGERNAILS? *AYE, AYE,* BERGELMIR KNOWS OF IT.
AND WHAT BERGELMIR KNOWS, *I* KNOW. I CAN TAKE YOU WHERE NAGLFAR SLEEPS.
BUT YOU'D HAVE TO DO A FAVOR FOR *ME* IN RETURN.
HIS ALE, HALF-DRUNK. HIS *BOOTS* BESIDE THE FIRE.
HE'S NOT GONE *FAR,* HAS HE, OLD MOTHER?
A FAVOR. AND YOU MUST *SWEAR* IT.
I SWEAR TO DO WHATEVER YOU *ASK* OF ME.
UNLESS YOU YOURSELF *RELEASE* ME FROM MY OATH.
GOOD ENOUGH?
OH, EXCELLENT GOOD, LUCIFER MORNINGSTAR. EXCELLENT GOOD.
LIKE PRIDE.
BEFORE THE *FALL.*

THIS IS THE PLACE WHERE SHE *DIED*. OR RATHER--
--THE PLACE WHERE SHE *BEGAN* TO DIE.
THERE IS *BLOOD* ON THE OLD STONES.
HER BLOOD. AND THE GREEN *ICHOR* OF THE THING THAT ATTACKED HER.
CE·DO NOT CROS
CESTIS OF THE DANCING FLESH. WHO *BECOMES* WHAT SHE CONSUMES. WHO GOD DID NOT *MAKE*.
SHE *WALKED* HERE. FIRST ON CLAWED PADS, AND THEN ON NAKED, HUMAN FEET.
THEN THE WINDING TRAIL OF A *SNAKE*, BUT ONLY FOR TEN YARDS OR SO. AFTER THAT THE *FOOTPRINTS* RETURN.
THE TRUTH? OR AN ELABORATE LIE? I MUST KNOW.
THEN I CAN *JUDGE*.

TAKE UP THAT AXE, PRINCE OF THE EASTERN SKY.
IT'S OLD, BUT IT HAS A GOOD EDGE TO IT.
NOW, YOU MUST LOOK ONLY FORWARD. NEITHER TO LEFT, NOR RIGHT, NOR OVER YOUR SHOULDER.
AND TURN NOT YOUR STEPS, BUT WALK ONLY WHERE I DIRECT YOU.
WHEN A LIVING THING COMES WITHIN YOUR SIGHT, YOU MUST KILL IT.
THE FIRST THING YOU SEE THAT LIVES AND MOVES. SWEAR AGAIN, UPON THE AXE.
I'M ALREADY BOUND. BUT I SWEAR AGAIN, UPON THIS AXE. UNLESS YOU RELEASE ME--
WHICH I WILL NOT.
--I'LL DO EXACTLY WHAT YOU'VE ASKED.
THEN WALK ON, TOWARDS THE SETTING SUN.
AND LET'S SEE WHAT CROSSES OUR PATH.

THE BELLOC HOUSE IS IN *DARKNESS* WHEN I RETURN.
THERE IS A HUNTER'S MOON, BUT THIS IS *UNRELIABLE* AS AN OMEN.
YESTERDAY I WATCHED MATTHEW BELLOC PUNCH HIS FISTS *BLOODY* AGAINST THIS TREE. I ASSUMED HE DID NOT *SEE* ME.
I HAVE ASSUMED TOO *MANY* THINGS.
A SCATTERING OF BONES. NOT SERIOUSLY *HIDDEN*, EVEN.
SCORED AND CHEWED, AND STRIPPED SO *CLEAN* OF FLESH THAT THEY ALMOST SHINE.
THE GLOVE COMPARTMENT IN YOUR CAR WAS THE FIRST PLACE I LOOKED.
THAT'S CALLED GIVING AID AND COMFORT TO THE *ENEMY*.

SO TELL ME, DETECTIVE.
WHODUNNIT?
THE THING THAT MURDERED ELAINE BELLOC ATTACKED HER *FIRST* IN YOUR SHAPE.
THAT'S WHY HER FRIENDS OPENED THE *DOOR* TO IT.
GOOD. AND THEN?
LATER, IN THE SUBWAY TUNNEL, WHEN IT HAD *KILLED* HER--
--IT TOOK ON SEVERAL *OTHER* SHAPES BEFORE IT FIXED AGAIN, ON HUMAN FORM.
SO YOU'RE SAYING SHE'S STILL SOMEWHERE *AROUND* HERE? IN BORROWED *FLESH?*
AMAZING.
THERE IS NO OTHER EXPLANATION.
NOW WE GET TO MY FAVORITE PART, LITTLE HUNTER.
THE KILL.

THERE. THE *HOLLOW* AT THE FOOT OF THE TREE.
GO INSIDE.
AND KILL THE FIRST THING I *SEE?*
YES! DO IT!
OR SHALL I SAY THAT LUCIFER MORNINGSTAR WAS *FORSWORN?*
NO.
I DON'T THINK YOU'LL BE ABLE TO SAY *THAT.*

KRA-TISCH
SO. "THE *FIRST* LIVING THING I SEE."
IN SPITE OF THE MIRROR, I'M AFRAID THAT WAS *YOU*, BERGELMIR.
HOLD! HOLD!
IT WAS A *JOKE*, MORNINGSTAR.
A JOKE, ONLY.
I'VE SOMETHING OF MY *BROTHER'S* HUMOR, AFTER ALL.
TAKE ME TO THE *SHIP*.
OR I'LL SHOW YOU WHAT MAKES *ME* LAUGH.

"IT'S NOT IN MY NATURE TO *LINGER* TOO LONG AFTER I'VE FED.
"IT'S NOT EVEN *HEALTHY.*"
BUT THE CARDS--THE BASANOS --
--WHEN THEY GAVE ME SUBSTANCE AGAIN, THEY SHACKLED ME. OUT OF FEAR, I SUPPOSE.
I AM *BOUND* IN THIS SHAPE. TRAPPED.
I *TRIED* TO CHANGE, DOWN IN THE TUNNEL.
I'VE TRIED SINCE. BUT I KEEP SLIPPING *BACK.*
AND WE EAT *MEMORIES,* AS WELL AS FLESH. THE LONGER I STAY IN HIS SHAPE, THE *STRONGER* THEY BECOME.
I'M TURNING INTO HIM. I'M.. THINKING HIS *THOUGHTS.*
SO I'VE *WAITED* FOR YOU TO COME. WITH YOUR BULLETS OF *FAITH* AND YOUR HEART OF FIRE.
I'M GUILTY. PASS *JUDGMENT* ON ME.

TO EXPOSE. TO JUDGE. TO PUNISH. THE *CREED* BY WHICH I LIVE.
BY WHICH I HAVE LIVED FOR FOUR THOUSAND *YEARS*.
I AM *OLD* TO BE LEARNING NUANCES--
WAIT! WHAT ARE YOU *DOING?*
--BUT THERE *ARE* NUANCES HERE. DISTURBING ONES.
THE WOMAN--BARBARA BELLOC--HAS LOST SO *MUCH*.
DON'T TURN YOUR *BACK* ON ME. I CONFESSED!
DO WHAT YOU *CAME* FOR!
IF SHE LOSES HER *HUSBAND* TOO, WHAT WILL THAT DO TO HER?
AND WHAT IS *DEATH*, TO THIS CREATURE--
I'LL KEEP ON *KILLING!* I MEAN IT!
I'LL EAT THE WHOLE FUCKING HUMAN *RACE!*
--COMPARED TO WHAT HAS ALREADY BEEN DONE TO IT?
M...MATT?
CHRIST! GO BACK TO BED, YOU WHINING PIECE OF *MEAT*. LEAVE ME ALONE.
YOU WERE *SHOUTING* AGAIN. IS EVERYTHING ALL RIGHT?
IT'S FINE.
EVERYTHING'S FINE.

WHERE WILL YOU *TAKE* HER, LUCIFER? TO THE WALLS OF HEAVEN?
THERE'S NOTHING IN HEAVEN THAT I *NEED*.
THE JOURNEY I HAVE IN MIND IS A *LONGER* ONE--INTO THE MANSIONS OF *SILENCE*.
AND I WON'T BE GOING *MYSELF*.
I HAVE A *CAPTAIN* AND A *HELMSMAN* LINED UP ALREADY.
WELL WHOEVER THEY ARE, I DON'T ENVY THEM *THAT* VOYAGE.
I'M GOING TO NEED THE *AXE*.
Υετυπ λαζψ!
YOU HEAR ME? SHAKE OFF YOUR *BLANKETS*, YOU HOAR-HEADED SOTS!
OR I'LL PART YOUR HAIR ALL THE WAY DOWN TO THE *SCALP*!

MY COUSINS OF THE *THURSES*.
I'M AFRAID THEY'RE A *TORPID* LOT.
BUT IN ANY EVENT, *THERE* IS THE NAGLFAR.
CAN YOU REALLY *BEAR* TO LOOK AT HER AND NOT TAKE HER HELM YOURSELF?
THERE ARE TIMES WHEN I PREFER TO WORK THROUGH *PROXIES*.
SO LONG AS THEY'RE *RELIABLE*.

IN BRUSSELS THERE IS A PEDOPHILE WHO WAS ARRESTED BUT NEVER CHARGED--
--BECAUSE OF WHAT HE KNEW ABOUT TWO GOVERNMENT MINISTERS.
AS I DICTATE THEIR CONFESSIONS, I THINK ABOUT WHAT MICHAEL SAID TO ME.
IS IT POSSIBLE THAT SOMEONE ELSE COULD HAVE SENT ME A DREAM?
USURPED MY HAND AND MY GUN? POINTED ME AND AIMED ME AT A TARGET OF HIS OWN CHOOSING?
AND TO WHAT END? TO *TORMENT* THE DEMON WITH PROMISE OF RELEASE?
TO ADD DEPTH AND *SAVOR* TO HER SUFFERING WITH THE BITTERSWEET LEAVEN OF *HOPE?*
BUT THAT WOULD MAKE ME AN INSTRUMENT OF *VENGEANCE,* RATHER THAN JUSTICE.
AND IT PRESUPPOSES A *MONSTER* WHO LOOKS OUT UPON THE UNIVERSE AND SEES NOTHING BUT A BOX OF *TOOLS.*
FOLLOWING THAT LINE OF THOUGHT TO ITS END WAS *THERAPEUTIC.* I SUMMON UP THE DREADFUL *PHANTASM* IN MY MIND--
--AND WITH GREAT RELIEF, *DISMISS* IT.

THE CREW OF THE NAGLFAR.
MAZIKEEN DAUGHTER OF LILITH, WAR LEADER OF THE LILIM IN EXILE. THAT FACE SHE WEARS IS NOT HER OWN: THE WOMAN JILL PRESTO GAVE IT TO HER WHEN HER OLD FACE BURNED--A FAVOR WHICH MAZIKEEN IS KEEN TO REPAY AT LENGTH WITH A VARIETY OF IMPLEMENTS.
BERGELMIR THE YOUNGEST AND SMALLEST OF THE GIANTS. HALF-BROTHER OF LOKI, WITH WHOM HE SHARES A CERTAIN WAY OF LOOKING AT THE WORLD. HIS FAULTS ARE HIS VIRTUES: HE'S TOO LAZY TO BE VINDICTIVE AND TOO FICKLE TO BE DANGEROUS.
CAL ALMOST AN ANGEL. LIKE HIS SISTER, ELAINE BELLOC, HE IS THE SEED OF THE ARCHANGEL MICHAEL INCUBATED IN A HUMAN MOTHER. BUT THE SEED GREW THWART AND BROKEN: CAL IS LESS HUMAN AND LESS ANGELIC THAN ONE MIGHT HAVE HOPED.
JILL PRESTO A CABARET ARTISTE WHO BECAME THE VESSEL FOR THE BASANOS, THE LIVING TAROT. JILL CARRIES BOTH THEIR CHILD AND THE MARK OF THEIR ANGER IN HER CRIPPLED ARM. UNDER THE BASANOS'S AEGIS, NO HARM CAN COME TO HER UNTIL HER PREGNANCY REACHES ITS TERM.
DAVID EASTERMAN A FORMER ADVERTISING EXECUTIVE, DAVID THOUGHT HE WAS ELAINE BELLOC'S FATHER UNTIL THE ANGEL SANDALPHON DISABUSED HIM AND MURDERED HIM IN QUICK SUCCESSION. HE PERSISTS AS AN EARTHBOUND GHOST, HIS (PARADOXICALLY) PATERNAL LOVE FOR ELAINE THE ROCK TO WHICH HE CLINGS.
GAUDIUM A CHERUB WHO TOOK THE LUCIFER TICKET AND SO LOST HIS RANK AND INSIGNIA. MICHAEL OFFERED HIM A SECOND CHANCE--TO GUARD ELAINE FROM A MONSTROUS ASSASSIN IN EXCHANGE FOR A FULL PARDON--BUT HE BLEW THAT TOO. GOD SAVE US FROM FALLEN CHERUBS WITH UNFINISHED BUSINESS.
SPERA GAUDIUM'S SISTER. IT WOULD BE WRONG TO HOLD THAT AGAINST HER.

THE PAVILION OF THE LANTERNS. NOW.
I STRUGGLE AGAINST ETERNITY.
AHRRRRR!
THIS IS MY *ART*. THIS IS MY *TRAGEDY*.
IT IS NOT *POIGNANT*. NOT AS SUCH. NOTHING I MAKE IS *EVER* POIGNANT.
PL-- PLEASE! OH GOD, PLEASE!
IT'S BECAUSE THERE IS NO *DEATH* HERE. IF THINGS CAN'T DIE, ONE SENSES A *FUTILITY* AT THE BOTTOM OF THEIR SUFFERING.
ALMOST... A *FAILURE*.
WHEN THE *SHIP* COMES, NO DOUBT IT WILL BE DIFFERENT. BUT TO THE EVERLASTING *PRESENT* OF ART, THERE IS NO SHIP. NOT YET.
AND NO *CHILDREN* ANYMORE. BECAUSE THE CHILDREN ARE *SUBSUMED* IN THE WORK.
AND SO I WILL ENDEAVOR TO FORGET--
--THAT YOU ONCE HAD *NAMES*.

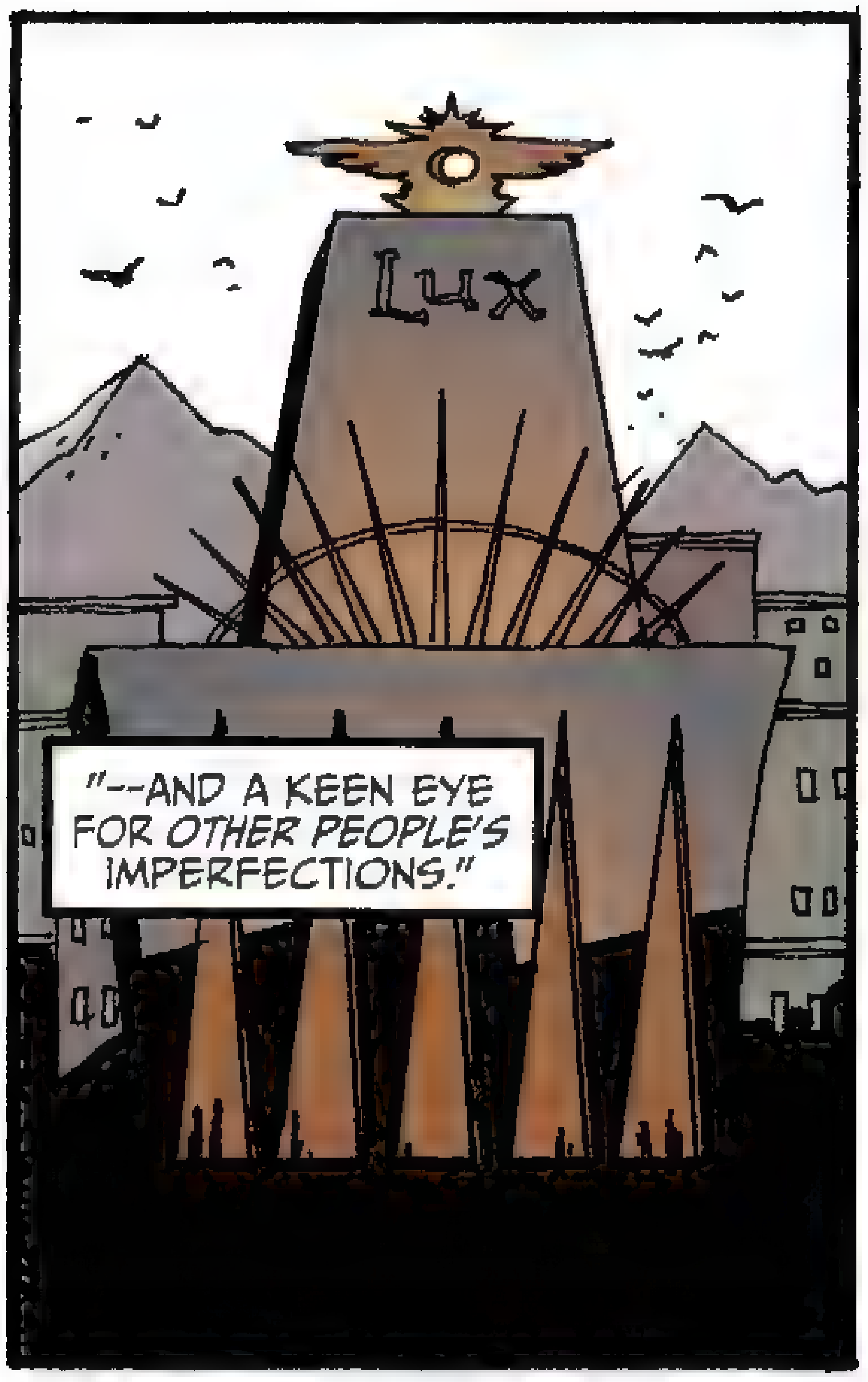
NAGLFAR

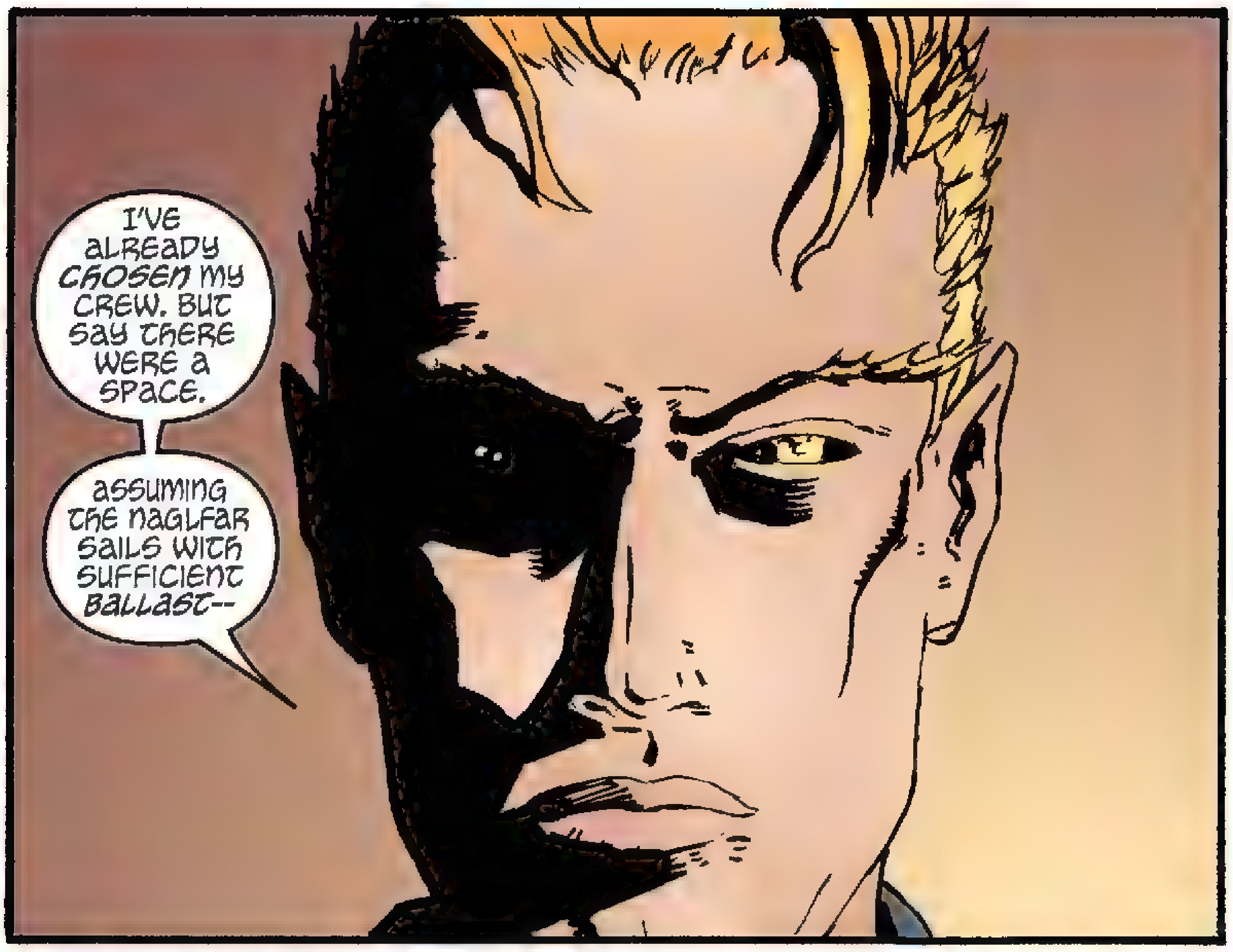
PART 1 OF 5 THE MUSTER

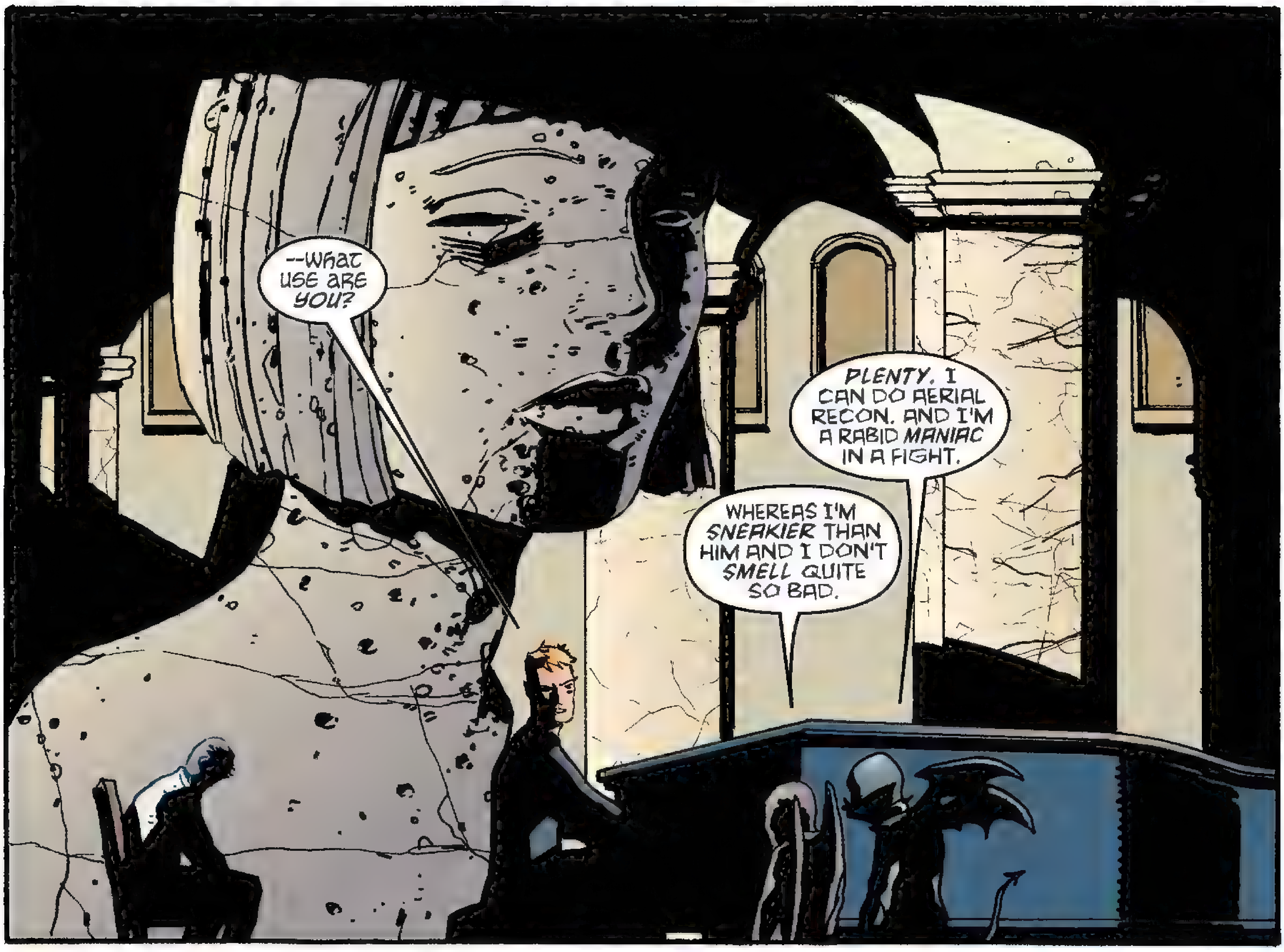
MIKE CAREY WRITER
PETER GROSS, RYAN KELLY & DEAN ORMSTON ARTISTS
DANIEL VOZZO COLOR AND SEPARATIONS
COMICRAFT LETTERS
CHRISTOPHER MOELLER COVER PAINTER
MARIAH HUEHNER ASSISTANT EDITOR
SHELLY BOND EDITOR
BASED ON CHARACTERS CREATED BY
GAIMAN, KIETH AND DRINGENBERG

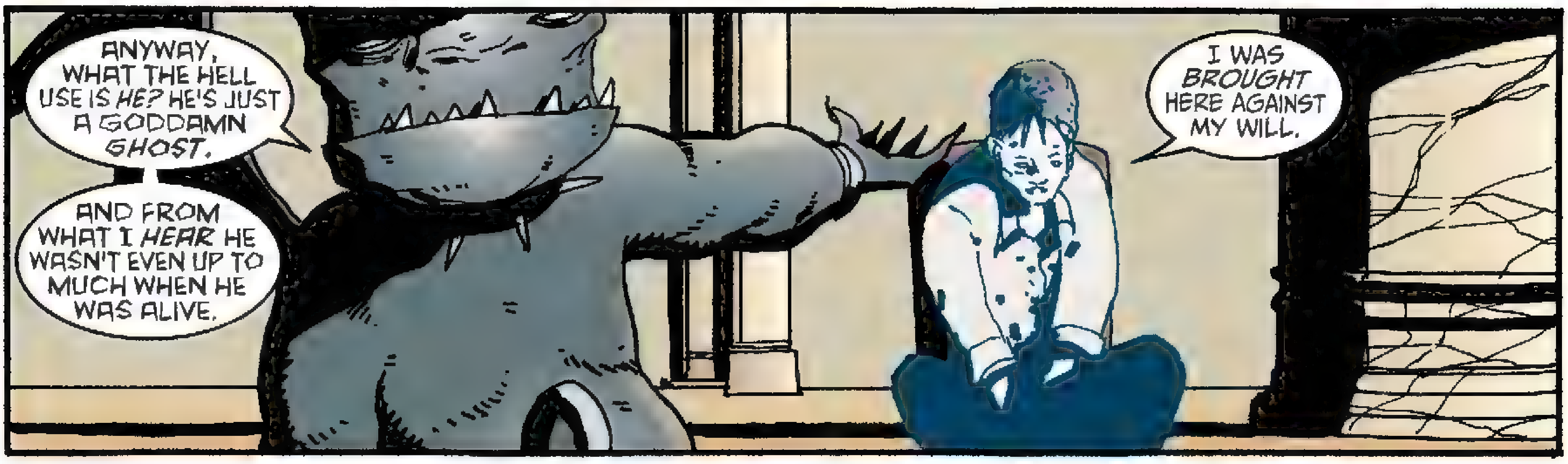
HOLD HER *STEADY* THERE, OAF!
I WANT HER CAULKED AND SEALED BEFORE THE *CAPTAIN* COMES ABOARD.
BE GENEROUS WITH THAT *BRUSH*, LAD.
IT SS... SS...
SOAKS IN, AYE. IT TAKES A GREAT *DEAL* OF TAR TO MAKE DEAD MEN'S *FINGERNAILS* SEAWORTHY.

IT SOUNDS ABSURD, I KNOW. BUT SINCE THE NAILS GROW AFTER DEATH, A LITTLE OF THE SPIRIT *MIGRATES* TO EACH OF THEM.
THINK OF IT AS A SHIP PLAITED OUT OF HUMAN *SOULS*.
BUT WH... WHAT'S IT F... F...FOR?
WHAT'S IT FOR? IT'S *FOR* GOING INTO *BATTLE*, YOU DOLT!
THE NAGLFAR IS A *WARSHIP*.
"IT WAS MY UNCLE *HRIMTHURSA* WHO MADE IT. *WOVE* IT, I SHOULD SAY.
"VERY DELICATE FINGERS HE HAD--AND FOR THIS WORK HE *NEEDED* THEM.
"ON THE DAY OF RAGNAROK, WHEN *FIMBULVETR* SWALLOWS THE WORLD, THE KIN OF JÖTUN WILL SAIL ON HER TO DISTANT ASGARD--
"--AND THE GODS OF THE AESIR, *SQUEEZED* BETWEEN ICE AND FIRE, WILL BE CUT DOWN LIKE CREATION'S LAST *HARVEST*."
OR SO THEY SAY. MYSELF, I'M PLANNING TO BE SOMEWHERE FAR ENOUGH AWAY THAT THE NOISE WON'T *REACH* ME.
A LITTLE MORE CAULK HERE.
THE MORNINGSTAR HAS A SOUR DISPOSITION--


LUX
"--AND A KEEN EYE FOR OTHER PEOPLE'S IMPERFECTIONS."


I'VE ALREADY CHOSEN MY CREW. BUT SAY THERE WERE A SPACE.
ASSUMING THE NAGLFAR SAILS WITH SUFFICIENT BALLAST--


--WHAT USE ARE YOU?
PLENTY. I CAN DO AERIAL RECON. AND I'M A RABID MANIAC IN A FIGHT.
WHEREAS I'M SNEAKIER THAN HIM AND I DON'T SMELL QUITE SO BAD.


ANYWAY, WHAT THE HELL USE IS HE? HE'S JUST A GODDAMN GHOST.
AND FROM WHAT I HEAR HE WASN'T EVEN UP TO MUCH WHEN HE WAS ALIVE.
I WAS BROUGHT HERE AGAINST MY WILL.

AND I REFUSE TO BE A *PARTY* TO THIS-- WHATEVER IT IS.
THE GHOST HAS A FUNCTION THAT RELATES TO *NAVIGATION*.
IT'S SIGNIFICANT ENOUGH TO IGNORE THE ENORMOUS *IRRITATION* HE PROVOKES.
WHEREAS IN YOUR CASE--
LOOK, I *KNOW* WHAT THIS IS ABOUT. YOU'RE GOING AFTER THE KID'S *SOUL*, AND I WANNA BE THERE.
IT'S SORT OF MY *JOB*.
WHAT ABOUT *YOU*? YOU'RE HIS SISTER, AREN'T YOU?
HE OWES ME *MONEY*.
FROM THE *LAST* TIME WE WENT AFTER HER SOUL.
WELL I SUPPOSE THERE'S NO HARM. EXCEPT TO OUR *DIGNITY*.
FOLLOW ME.
WE'VE GOT ONE *MORE* CREWMAN TO COLLECT.

B...BUT WHY ARE YOU C...COMING ON *THIS* VOYAGE? WE'RE NOT *GOING* TO AS...AS... ASGARD.
NOT BY MY OWN *CHOICE*, CAL.
HUF! LORD LUCIFER FELT THAT SINCE I TRIED TO *KILL* HIM, I OWED HIM A SERVICE.
HE PUT THIS POINT OF VIEW MOST *PERSUASIVELY*.
AND *YOURSELF?*
I W... *WANTED* TO COME. AS SOON AS L...L...LUCIFER EXPLAINED IT TO ME, I *B...BEGGED* HIM TO TAKE ME.
TO LET ME *HELP* F... F...FIND...
HOLD. WE'VE A *VISITOR*.
OUR *CAPTAIN*, NO DOUBT.
AND IN GOOD *TIME* TOO. THE THURSES ARE MAKING UP THEIR MINDS TO *TRY* SOMETHING.
IT'S A *PAINFULLY* SLOW PROCESS, BUT STILL...

ARE YOU THE *HELSMAN*, BERGELMIR?
THAT I *AM*, MADAME.
A JOB THAT BECAME A THOUSAND TIMES MORE *ATTRACTIVE* THE MOMENT YOU STEPPED ABOARD.
I AM YOUR *CAPTAIN*.
UUF!
LUCIFER SAID YOU'D NEED WATCHING. I PROMISED HIM I'D *SKIN* YOU IF YOU DID LESS THAN YOUR JOB.
AN *EXCELLENT* WOMAN.
I WONDER WHAT HER *BEDPLAY* IS LIKE.
BOY.
Y... YES, C... C... CAPTAIN?
STOW THIS IN THE *DECK HOUSE*. AND THEN SHOW ME THE *WEAPONS*.

LAS VEGAS.
A TRIP?
YOU MEAN A *TOUR?* YOU BOOKED A TOUR WITHOUT *CONSULTING* ME?
NO, HOWARD. I MEAN A *CRUISE.* Y'KNOW, FOR MY HEALTH?
KING PALOOKA
SKINBOAT LATE SHOW
FOR YOUR *HEALTH?* JILL, PLEASE.
I GIVE THAT SHIT OUT. I DON'T *SWALLOW* IT.
OKAY. I'VE GOT SOME *BUSINESS* TO TAKE CARE OF.
PERSONAL STUFF.
LORETTA, HOLD MY *CALLS.*
WITH BOTH HANDS, HOWARD.
NOV
JILL, LISTEN TO ME. AS A *FRIEND.*
THE POLICE ARE SNIFFING AROUND YOU BECAUSE OF THAT *GUY* WHO DISAPPEARED. THE *FIORENZE* ARE PISSED BECAUSE YOU WALKED OUT MID-SEASON.
THIS IS NOT THE TIME TO GO AND *CUDDLE* YOUR INNER CHILD.
PLUS--AND I DIDN'T WANT TO SAY THIS--YOU'RE UNDER *CONTRACT* TO DELIVER THE THIRD ALBUM BY JUNE.
SO I'M SORRY, BUT IT'S *NO.*

YEAH, WELL I'M SORRY TOO, HOWARD. YOU'LL JUST HAVE TO SUE ME.
JILL, DON'T DO THIS. IT'S CAREER SUICIDE.
SHIT!
SHIT WITH ICE CREAM!
DON'T STARE AT IT, OKAY?
FUCK! JUST STOP!
I'M GONNA GET THIS FIXED.
I'M GOING TO A PLACE WHERE THEY CAN DEAL WITH STUFF LIKE THIS.
AND THEN I'LL BE BACK, HOWARD. BETTER THAN EVER.
YOU TEAR UP THOSE CONTRACTS AND YOU'LL BE WEEPING BLOOD IN A MONTH OR SO.
OKAY, SO SHE KNOWS HOW TO EXIT.
YOU WANT TO RECLAIM YOUR LOWER JAW AND CALL LEGAL?

CAN I SPEAK A *WORD*, CAPTAIN.
YES.
BUT KEEP IT *BRIEF*.
WE'RE READY TO *SAIL* AS SOON AS THE REST OF THE MUSTER IS ABOARD.
AND I'VE GOT SOMETHING TO *SHOW* YOU. FOR YOUR APPROVAL.
I GAVE SOME THOUGHT TO THE QUESTION OF *OARSMEN*.
WE CAN GET BY *WITHOUT* THEM, OF COURSE, BUT THEY'LL HAVE THEIR USES.
SO--
--I CAME UP WITH *THESE*.
UNLESS YOU'VE ANY OBJECTION...

WHAT *ARE* THEY?
JUST *TWIGS* FROM MY COUSINS' HAIR.
PUT THEM IN THE EARTH AND THEY *QUICKEN*. IT'S HOW GIANTS BREED.
GIANTS?
IT'S JUST A *WORD*. I'M OF THE GIANTS' BLOOD MYSELF, BUT YOU'D HARDLY *KNOW* IT.
UNLESS I WERE TO SHOW YOU MY--
C...C... CAPTAIN.
LORD LUCIFER. HE'S H... HERE.
THAT'S A FINE SPEECH GONE TO *WASTE*.

WHAT CONDITIONS DO YOU NEED TO SET SAIL?
WE CAN SET SAIL NOW.
THE OARSMEN CAN TAKE HER TO THE MOUTH OF THE VALLEY, AND WE'LL CATCH A WIND THERE.
GOOD. HERE IS THE COMPASS, MAZIKEEN. IT WILL POINT TO HER AND HER ALONE.
IT'LL ALSO CURSE AND ARGUE WITH ITSELF A LOT, BUT YOU TUNE THAT OUT AFTER AWHILE.
I CHOSE MOST OF YOU FOR A REASON. AND IT WAS USUALLY THE SAME REASON.
I THOUGHT YOU HAD SOME SLENDER CHANCE OF COMING BACK.
BUT THE MANSIONS ARE AN UNFORGIVING PLACE.
YOU'LL HAVE TO RISE ABOVE YOUR INDIVIDUAL HATREDS AND MISTRUSTS. OTHERWISE YOU'LL DIE.
OR ELSE YOU'LL LIVE, BUT COME BACK UNSUCCESSFUL.
IN WHICH CASE I'LL KILL MOST OF YOU ANYWAY. GOOD LUCK.

HE GIVES AN INSPIRATIONAL SPEECH DOESN'T HE?
N... N... N...
JOKE, LAD, JOKE.
PERMISSION TO TAKE HER OUT, CAPTAIN?
YES.
DO IT.
NOW ROW, YOU BASTARDS, ROW!
THE WIND WON'T WAIT FOREVER!
KRKKKKKKKKKK
CHRIST ON A CRUTCH!
THE SUSPENSION ON THIS THING IS FUCKED!

SLOWER ON THE RIGHT! BRING HER HEAD AROUND *YARELY!*
WE'RE *AFLOOD,* CAPTAIN.
AND WE'RE *STEADY* TO THE WEST.
UH... HI. JILL PRESTO. ARE YOU GUYS PART OF AN *ACT?*
YEAH. *KNIFE-THROWING.*
WANNA SEE?
WHY STAND YOU SO *AMAZED,* MAN?
THE BOY WITH WINGS. HE TRIED TO *KILL* ME ONCE.
DID HE SO?
WELL, NOW THAT YOU'RE *DEAD,* I'M SURE YOU'LL BE FAST FRIENDS.

HEY!
ARE THOSE THINGS *SUPPOSED* TO BE THERE?
WHAT ARE THEY *DOING?*
REGISTERING... *UFF...A PROTEST!*
THE THURSES HAVE *GUARDED* THE SHIP FOR A THOUSAND YEARS. AND THEY CAN ONLY KEEP ONE IDEA IN THEIR HEADS AT A *TIME.*
BROOOOM
KABOOOOM

IF WE STOP THEY MAY LOSE *INTEREST* IN US.
THEN WE CAN--
HOLD HER *STEADY.*
HE *SEES* US.
LET *HIM* DEAL WITH IT.
THIS IS WHAT I WAS *NAMED* FOR.
IN CASE YOU *WONDERED.*

DOWN HAUL! SLEIPNER'S SHIT, SPREAD THE BLOODY SAIL!
WE RUN OR WE *ROAST!*
DOWN HAUL?
JUST... *PULL*... BROTHER.
DON'T ARGUE ABOUT NAUTICAL *TERMINOLOGY.*

IT'S HARD TO TELL HIS ASSISTANCE FROM HIS *VENGEANCE*, ISN'T IT?
HE DID WHAT HE *NEEDED* TO.
SO, IS THERE A *NAUTICAL* TERM FOR WHAT JUST HAPPENED?
SHUT UP AND PUT THE *SAIL* OUT.
WHERE *EXACTLY* ARE WE GOING?
T...T...TO HEAVEN.
AND THEN ON B...BEYOND. *FAR* BEYOND.
THE MANSIONS OF THE S...S...
SILENCE.

BLEARGHHH!
NO WORSE THAN *NAUSEA?*
HEY, IT'S BAD *ENOUGH.*
YOU WERE NOT *AFRAID* WHEN THE SKY CAUGHT FIRE?
I DIDN'T SAY I WASN'T SCARED. BUT THERE'S LESS AT *STAKE* FOR ME THAN FOR THE REST OF YOU.
I'M SORT OF *PRE-INSURED* AGAINST FIRE AND THEFT.
BUT NOT AGAINST *ALL* INJURY, CLEARLY.
AMONG THE *NORDINGA* THEY WOULD HAVE SAID THAT A GOD HAD TOUCHED YOU.
ACTUALLY THAT'S PRETTY MUCH WHAT *HAPPENED.* LONG STORY.
THEN YOU SHALL *TELL* IT TO ME. AND I'LL *PAY* FOR THE TALE.
AMONG MY MANY OTHER SKILLS, I AM A SMITH. I'LL HAMMER YOU OUT A *MAKE-SEEM* IN SILVER OR GOLD.
IT'S GOING TO BE A LONG *VOYAGE* AFTER ALL.
I'M A MAN WHO MUST OCCUPY HIS MIND--AND HIS *HANDS.*

THERE.
ON THE EASTERN FACE OF *HEAVEN.*
THEY ARE *COMING.*
CLASHING *TONES* OF HOPE AND FEAR AND MISGIVING.
RAZOR-SHARP *TANG* OF COERCION.
WHAT THEY ARE *MADE* TO DO. NOT WHAT THEY CHOOSE.
THE MORNINGSTAR *SENDS* THEM INTO THE DARK. LIKE A LITTLE *HOOK* ON A LONG, LONG LINE.
BECAUSE HE DARE NOT COME *HIMSELF* TO FACE US.
BROTHERS.
SISTERS.
I TASTE *DISASTER.*

--JUST *SAYING* THAT'S ALL. WHEN I SIGNED UP, I THOUGHT THIS WAS LUCIFER'S SHOW.
WITH HIM ALONG IT'S *EPIC*. WITH US IT'S MORE OF A SITUATION *COMEDY*.
WELL I GUESS HE HAD *OTHER* STUFF HE HAD TO DO.
YEAH, RIGHT. LIKE STAY HOME AND TOKE A COUPLE OF BOTTLES OF *CLARET?*
IT'S THE WAR IN *HEAVEN* ALL OVER AG--
GAUDIUM, WILL YOU SHUT *UP* ABOUT THE FUCKING WAR IN HEAVEN?!
SO WHO DO YOU THINK IS GONNA *DIE* FIRST?
I'M OFFERING THREE TO *ONE* ON THE KID WITH THE WINGS.

WE NEED TO KNOW WHERE WE'RE *GOING.*
AND THERE'S ONLY *ONE* WAY OF FINDING OUT.
I KNOW, I KNOW. I'M JUST *FRIGHTENED,* THAT'S ALL.
COULDN'T SOMEONE *ELSE--?*
NO. NO ONE ELSE.
THE REST OF THE CREW HAVE *OTHER* FUNCTIONS. YOU ARE TOTALLY *EXPENDABLE* EXCEPT FOR THIS.
DO I HAVE TO *THREATEN* YOU?
NO I *GET* THE PICTURE.
THANKS FOR YOUR BRUTAL *HONESTY.*

NAGLFAR

PART 2 OF 5 THE VOYAGE OUT

MIKE CAREY WRITER
PETER GROSS, RYAN KELLY & DEAN ORMSTON ARTISTS
DANIEL VOZZO COLOR AND SEPARATIONS
COMICRAFT LETTERS
CHRISTOPHER MOELLER COVER PAINTER
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GAIMAN, KIETH AND DRINGENBERG

OH
FU
KKKKHHHHHHHHH!
WELL NOW, LOVEY--
WHAT CAN WE LONG-DEAD LADIES DO FOR THE DEVIL'S *HANDMAIDEN?*
YOU CAN TELL ME WHERE ELAINE BELLC IS.
IF YOU KNOW.

WHERE OUR *LAINIE* IS?
SHE *DIED*, POPPET. IN GIVING YOUR LORD HIS *LIFE* BACK.
SO WE OWE HIM NO *FAVORS*. NO FAVORS AT ALL.
BUT *HE* OWES ONE TO *HER*. AND HE DECIDED TO *PAY*.
AYE, OUT OF PURE *LOVE*, NO DOUBT?
AND NOT BECAUSE OF ANY *SCHEMES* THAT STILL INCLUDE HER?
HER SPIRIT LIES *AHEAD* OF YOU. A LONG WAY AWAYS. AND OFF TO PORT.
SPEAK TO US *AGAIN*, WHEN YOU'RE CLOSER TO.
AND IN THE *MEANTIME*--
--WE'LL THINK ABOUT WHETHER OR NOT TO *TRUST* YOU.
ARE YOU ALL R... *RIGHT*, MISTER EASTERMAN?
I'M *DEAD*.
YOU WERE *THERE*, REMEMBER? YOU EVEN HELPED *OUT* A LITTLE.

YOU'VE A TENDENCY TO *FLINCH* FROM OUR BOLD CAPTAIN, SWEETING.
I ASSUME YOU'VE CROSSED PATHS *BEFORE*.
YEAH, SHE WANTS TO KILL ME. ONLY THERE'S SOMETHING *INSIDE* ME KEEPING ME SAFE. SHE HAS TO WAIT UNTIL I *DITCH* IT.
WHICH IS WHY I'M *HERE*.
JUST WISH I KNEW WHERE THE FUCK HERE *IS*.
WELL, I'VE A *SUPERSTITION* ABOUT WOMEN'S WISHES. SO HERE NOW--
--YOU'RE FAMILIAR WITH HEAVEN AND *HELL*, ARE YOU NOT?
I'VE HEARD OF 'EM.
EXCELLENT PLACES BOTH. BUT ESSENTIALLY--IF YOU'LL PARDON THE *BANALITY* OF THE METAPHOR--TWO FACES OF THE SAME *COIN*.
AND GOD *FLICKS* THE COIN AND BIDS EACH SPIRIT CHOOSE.
CHAINS OR CHERUBIM. WILL YOU, NILL YOU--
BUT THEN THERE ARE THE *IRRECONCILABLE* DEAD. THOSE THAT SAY NO TO BOTH.
AND *OTHER* SOULS, FOR WHOM HELL AND HEAVEN OFFER NO FITTING *HARBOR*.
THE *EDGE* OF THE COIN, SWEETING.
THAT IS WHERE WE SAIL.

THE MUSEUM INSEL, BERLIN.
BROTHER--
--YOUR TASTE FOR IRONY IS BECOMING BOTH OBVIOUS AND OPPRESSIVE.
IRONY? OH, YOU MEAN ANGELS AND HARPS?
AMUSING. I REALLY HADN'T THOUGHT OF IT.
THEN WHY INVITE ME HERE? IS THERE NEWS?
NOT YET. BUT I WANTED YOU TO SEE SOMETHING.
CHRISTIAN HAARNACK MADE THIS IN 1785.
THEN, JUST BEFORE THE ALLIES TOOK BERLIN IN 1945, A SHELL EXPLODED AGAINST THE SOUTH WALL AND MADE THIS CRACK IN THE CASING, HERE.
I ALWAYS THINK OF YOU WHEN I THINK OF HARPS. THEY MAKE A SWEET SOUND WHILE THEIR OWN INTERNAL STRESSES TEAR THEM APART IN SLOW MOTION.
JUST A CRACK. A TENTH OF AN INCH LONG.
AND FIFTY YEARS LATER--
CRASH
--HERE WE ARE.

SO YOU'D HAVE ME DRAW SOME SORT OF LESSON FROM THE DESTRUCTION OF BEAUTY.
DON'T BE RIDICULOUS.
BUT SUPPOSE THE HARP IS A BRIDGE--
--AND THE CRACK'S IN A CENTRAL SUPPORT, A METER BELOW THE SURFACE WHERE IT CAN'T BE SEEN? WHAT THEN?
ARE YOU TRYING TO TEMPT ME, LUCIFER? OUR FATHER HAS A PLAN, AND BOTH DEATH AND LIFE ARE PART OF IT.
WHY SHOULD I INTERVENE TO PREVENT HIS PURPOSE?
BUT YOU DID INTERVENE. WHEN YOU SENT GAUDIUM TO SAVE YOUR DAUGHTER.
THAT WAS DIFFERENT. SHE WAS NOT PART OF THE PATRIMONY OF ADAM.
SHE IS A UNIQUE CASE.
SHE IS YOU WITH A WOMB. UNIQUE DOESN'T EVEN BEGIN TO DESCRIBE WHAT ELAINE IS.
WATCH THE BRIDGE FALL DOWN, AND THEN TELL ME WHERE YOU STAND.

M...M... ME?
WE'LL *ALL* TAKE A TURN, BUT YES.
THIS TIME, IT'S YOU, CAL.
TAKE ONE OF THE *IMPS,* TOO. I WANT TO KNOW EVERYTHING YOU CAN *TELL* ME ABOUT THE TERRAIN UP AHEAD.
BEING WHAT THEY *ARE,* THEY MIGHT SEE SOMETHING YOU'D MISS.
WHAT, LIKE A *LIQUOR* STORE? NEVER MIND. YOU'VE DONE THIS *BEFORE,* RIGHT?
N...NO. TO BE HONEST, THERE AREN'T M...M...*MANY* THINGS I'VE DONE BEFORE.
WELL JUST ZIG WHEN I *ZIG* AND ZAG WHEN I ZAG.
NOW THIS IS WHAT WE CALL "BROKEN GROUND."
YOU'RE LIKELY TO GET NASTY *SURPRISES* BECAUSE YOU CAN'T ALWAYS SEE WHAT'S COMING.
ALTHOUGH, HAVING *SAID* THAT--
--THERE'LL ALWAYS BE A FEW THINGS THAT SORT OF JUMP RIGHT *OUT* AT YOU.

M...MIRRORS! THOSE ARE MIRRORS! BUT THEY'RE AS BIG AS M...M... *MOUNTAINS.*
GREAT STUFF. GOOD RECONNAISSANCE STARTS WITH GOOD *DESCRIPTION.*
I'M PUTTING *YOU* IN CHARGE OF THAT.
I TH...THINK WE SHOULD GO BACK NOW, GAUDIUM. AND TELL THE C... THE CAP...
TELL HER WHAT? WHERE SHE CAN GO TO GET HER *LIPSTICK* STRAIGHT?
WE'VE GOT NOTHING TO *REPORT* YET.
THIS PLACE IS KIND OF WEIRD THOUGH.
I MEAN, IS THAT *ROCK,* OR SOME KIND OF PLANT FIBER, OR--?

OH SHIT.

WHATCHA *MAKIN'*, CURLY?
WHAT, LIKE A KIND OF A SORT OF A *SCULPTURE* OR SOMETHING?
IT'S A *GIFT*, LITTLE ONE. FOR THE WOMAN, JILL PRESTO.
NO, A GIFT OF A MORE *PRACTICAL* SORT. BUT PRAY YOU, LET IT BE A *SECRET* TILL IT'S *DONE*.
OH, THAT'S SO *LIKE* YOU. THAT COMPASSION.
FOR SOMEONE SO *HIDEOUSLY* CRIPPLED.
OF COURSE, YOU DO KNOW SHE'S *PREGNANT*, RIGHT?
BERGELMIR.
AYE, CAPTAIN?
GET BACK TO YOUR POST--
--AND STAND ON MY *ORDER*.

HUH! HUF! WE TRIED TO LEAD THEM *AWAY*, BUT THEY HEADED STRAIGHT FOR THE SHIP.
WHERE'S THE *KID?* DID HE GET BACK OKAY?
THERE ARE *BOWS* IN THE DECK HOUSE. BREAK THEM OUT.
CAPTAIN, I *AWAIT* YOUR ORDERS.
DON'T TAKE YOUR *HANDS* OFF THAT TILLER.
AND KEEP THE OARSMEN TO A DOUBLE *STROKE*.
STEER US A WAY *THROUGH* THEM.

CHOOM
OKAY, MOTHERFUCKERS! I'M ARMED AND DANGEROUS!
THEY JUST FALL *APART!*
WHAT THE HELL *IS* THIS?
IT HAS THE STINK OF A *DIVERSION.*

THE NAGLFAR CARRIES WITH IT EVERY ITEM OF UNFINISHED *BUSINESS* I COULD THINK OF.
I WANTED TO BE FREE OF *ENCUMBRANCES.* FREE TO PLAN.
IF YOU WERE EVER TO DIE, THAT WOULD MAKE AS GOOD AN EPITAPH FOR YOU AS ANY.
SARCASM? THAT'S A NEW NOTE FOR *YOU,* BROTHER.
LUCIFER, I AM **GRATEFUL** FOR YOUR SEEKING OUT MY DAUGHTER'S SPIRIT. BUT I WOULD HAVE YOU BE **DIRECT.**
NOT PROWL AROUND ME LIKE AN ANIMAL AFRAID OF THE LIGHT.
WAS I PROWLING? I MERELY ASKED YOU TO STATE YOUR *POSITION,* THAT'S ALL.
I STAND WHERE I HAVE **ALWAYS** STOOD.
I WILL NOT FIGHT AGAINST OUR FATHER. AND I WILL NOT HELP YOU **BECOME** HIM.
SMACK!

BROTHER... DO NOT TEMPT ME TO ANGER.
THERE IS THE SAFETY OF THIS WORLD TO CONSIDER.
I WANT YOU TO BE ANGRY.
HE GAVE US POWER AS GREAT AS HIS OWN--AND THEN WHEN HE WAS DONE WITH WORLD-MAKING, HE FORBADE US TO USE IT.
HE LIED TO ME, TRIED TO EXILE ME FROM THE FACE OF CREATION. AND HE ENGINEERED THE DEATH OF YOUR DAUGHTER.
MUST I REPEAT MYSELF? HE HAS A PLAN.
HAS HE? HE NEVER SHARED IT WITH ANY OF US?
WE HAVE TAKEN IT ON TRUST SINCE THE TIME BEFORE TIME.
BUT YOU STILL HAVE FAITH IN IT? THE GREAT PLAN?
I--YES. COMPLETELY.
BECAUSE I KNOW A PLACE WHERE WE CAN GO AND SEE IT. IF YOU'RE INTERESTED.

WHAT'S--?
WHAT *IS* THAT?
--THAT--?
OKAY, ELAINE. WHEN A BUNNY RABBIT *DIES*, HE SORT OF--
GOES UP TO *HEAVEN*?
NO. BUT A BIT OF HIM STILL *LIVES* INSIDE YOUR HEAD.
A KNIFE. A KNIFE WITH A SERRATED *BLADE* AND A SLIP-FREE RUBBER GRIP.
WHY WAS SHE *CARRYING* IT? TO TRIM HER *FINGERNAILS*?
UHHHHHHH!

KRESCHHH
TISCH
TISCH
TISCH
THEY'RE *DYING*. I THOUGHT-- I THOUGHT THEY WERE GOING TO *ATTACK* US.
DO YOU NOT FEEL THAT LIGHT *BLEEDING* INTO YOUR MIND?
THIS IS A *SUICIDE* ATTACK.

VERY WELL. I SEE THE TRICK, AND HOW IT'S DONE.

BERGELMIR.
TAKE US UP. AS HIGH AS SHE'LL GO. WE NEED--
THUCK
CURLY? WHAT ARE YOU DOING TO US?
CAN'T--
--CAN'T THINK--
DON'T STRUGGLE, LITTLE ONE.
THERE'S DEATH OR THERE'S ME.

SIT UP *SLOWLY*, HELMSMAN. AS SLOWLY AS A SHADOW CROSSING A *SUNDIAL*.
AND EXPLAIN TO ME WHY I SHOULD NOT *KILL* YOU.
BECAUSE WE ARE STILL *ALIVE*, CAPTAIN.
NOW *THERE'S* A REASON THAT SPRINGS TO MIND.
AND OUR *SURVIVAL* DEPENDED ON YOUR ATTACKING US?
YOU FELT THE *FORCE* OF THOSE MEMORIES. THOSE LIVES.
THE TIDAL *PULL* OF THEM. WHIPPING OUR *MINDS* INTO FROTH AND TATTERS.
I SAY WE STRING 'IM UP. WE HAVE PLENTY OF *ROPE*.
BE *SILENT*, IMP.
WHAT WAS HAPPENING THEN?

I BELIEVE THAT THE MIRRORS CONTAINED OTHER UNIVERSES. OTHER CREATIONS. *REJECTED* ONES, PERHAPS.
GO ON.
AND THAT THOSE WINGED MONSTERS FLEW IN *CLOSE* TO THEM IN ORDER TO WAKE THEM. TO COAX THEM *OPEN*.
EACH UNIVERSE AS IT *UNFOLDED* EXERTED A PULL ON OUR MINDS AND SOULS.
THE TENSION BETWEEN THOSE PULLS WOULD ULTIMATELY HAVE PROVED *FATAL*.
I THOUGHT *UNCONSCIOUSNESS* MIGHT NEGATE OR AT LEAST SLOW THE EFFECT.
SO YOU--YOU *SAVED* US ALL.
BY WHACKING OUR *SKULLS* WITH A BAULK OF TIMBER?
GREAT PLAN.
WELL I USED A *CANTRIP* FIRST. BUT SOME OF YOU WEREN'T SUSCEPTIBLE.
I THOUGHT THE TIMBER WAS AN *INSPIRED* IMPROVISATION.
A LITTLE *GRATITUDE* WOULD SEEM TO BE APPROPRIATE.

--OWE ME A HUNDRED AND FIFTY OF THOSE GREEN DOLLAR THINGS, AND YOU'RE *NOT* GETTING OUT OF IT.
NO I DON'T. CAL'S *MISSING* NOT DEAD.
I DON'T PAY OUT FOR LESS THAN HALF A *CADAVER*.
I USURPED YOUR COMMAND. I BEG YOUR *PARDON* FOR IT.
YOU DID WHAT WAS NECESSARY. WHAT *WORKED*.
BUT NOW WE'VE A CREWMAN LOST AND AN *ENEMY* WHOSE FACE WE HAVEN'T EVEN SEEN.
I THINK THERE'S *WORSE* TO COME.

IT IS A *CHAIN.*
A STRUCTURE THAT IS BOTH *ROBUST* AND *ELEGANT.*
EVERY ACTION BIRTHS THE *NEXT,* SO THAT THERE IS AN INEVITABLE PROGRESS--
--TOWARDS AN END POINT WHICH AT FIRST WOULD HAVE BEEN *UNTHINKABLE.*
I HAVE NOT *ENJOYED* BEING DEAD. BUT IT HAS EXPOSED ME TO NEW SENSATIONS.
SNIP
AND IT TURNS OUT TO HAVE ITS *PRACTICAL* USE, TOO.
BECAUSE, YOU SEE, THEY KNOW *NOTHING* OF THIS PLACE, OR ITS RULES.
THEY WILL EXPECT IT TO BEHAVE AS IF IT'S REAL.
AND THE TIDES WILL DRAG THEM UNDER--
--WHILE I *WATCH.*

KRAKOODOOM
HOW DID WE GET *INTO* THIS FRIGGIN' MESS?
WELL, THIS KID ELAINE GOT *FERSCHMUTTERED*, AND NOW EVERYONE'S SAYING SHE'S GOD'S GRANDDAUGHTER, AND LUCIFER WANTS US TO FIND HER SOUL SO HE CAN--
I WAS BEING *RHETORICAL*, FOR FUCK'S SAKE!
HEY.
HEY, *LOOK!*
IT'S THE *KID*, CAL.
HE FOUND HIS WAY BACK.

NAGLFAR

PART 3 OF 5 THE WRACK

MIKE CAREY WRITER
PETER GROSS, RYAN KELLY & DEAN ORMSTON ARTISTS
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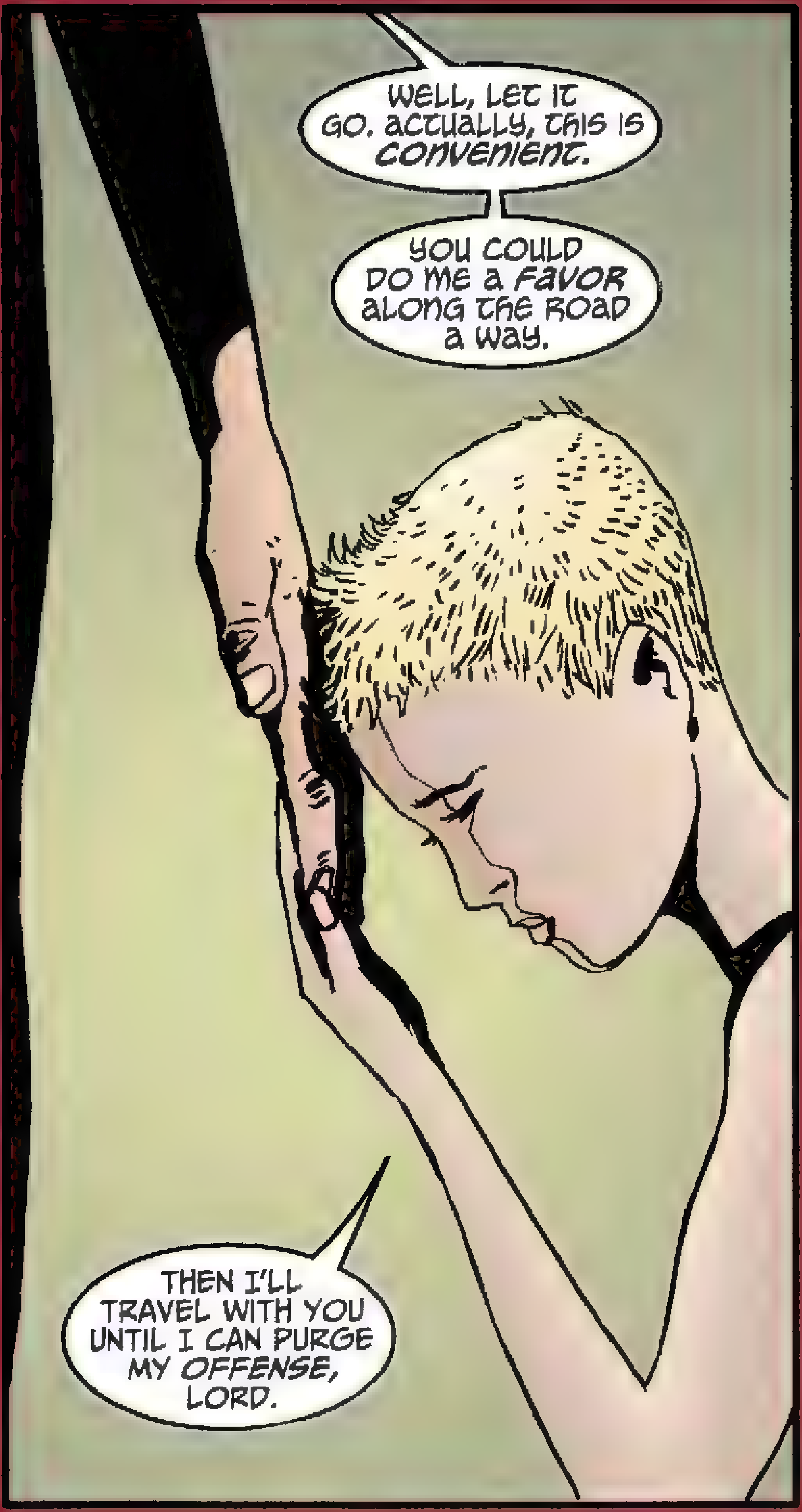
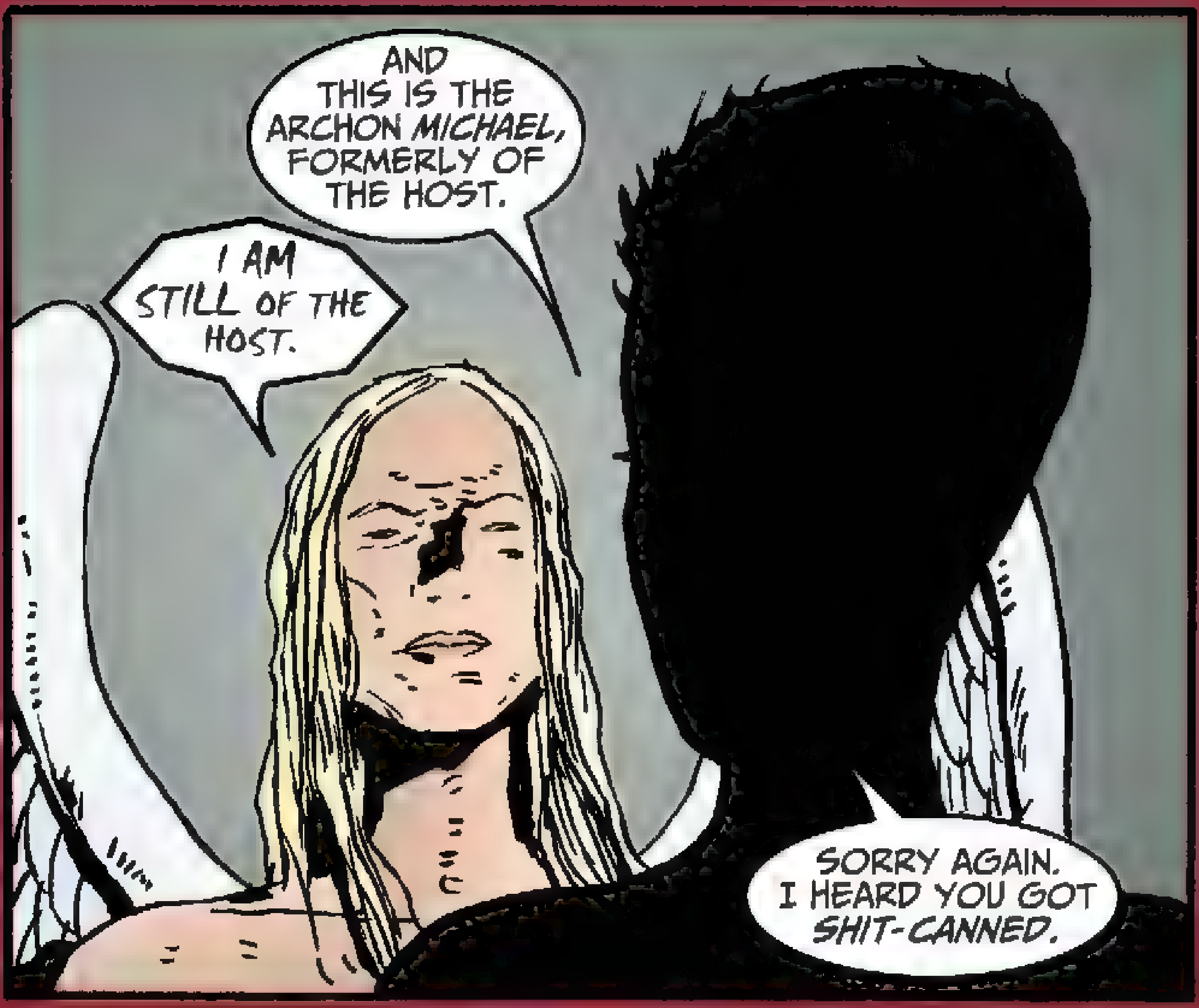
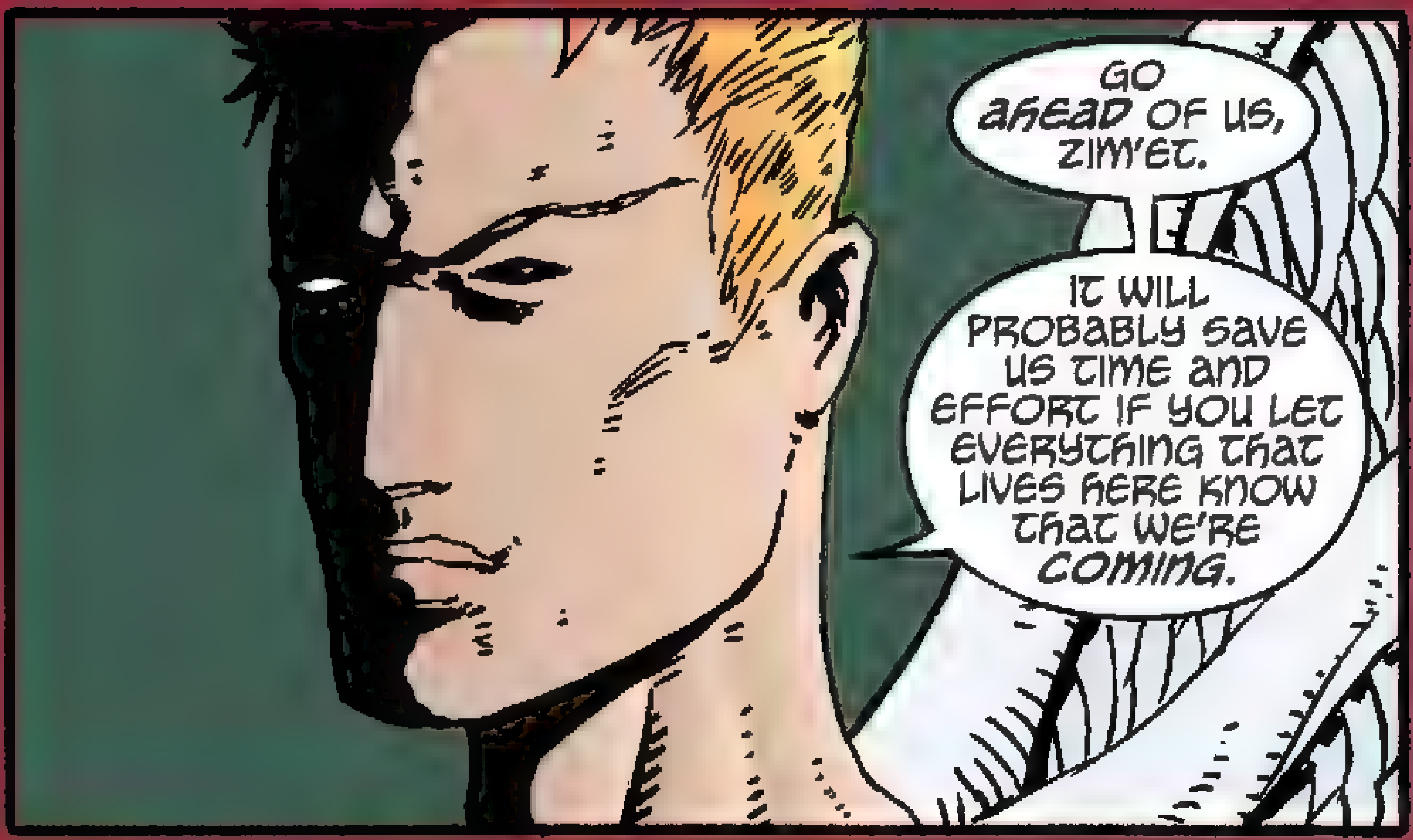
YOU'RE DRIFTING TO *WINDWARD.*
SHE'S THAT WAY. *THAT* WAY!
IF I TAKE THE NAGLFAR *THAT* WAY--SHE'LL RIP HER *BELLY* OUT ON THE ROCKS.
WE'LL WEAVE A *CALMING* IF WE CAN.
BUT THERE *IS* A PATH.
JUST FOLLOW OUR *LIGHT--*
--AND STEER BETWEEN THE *PEAKS* OF THE WAVES.

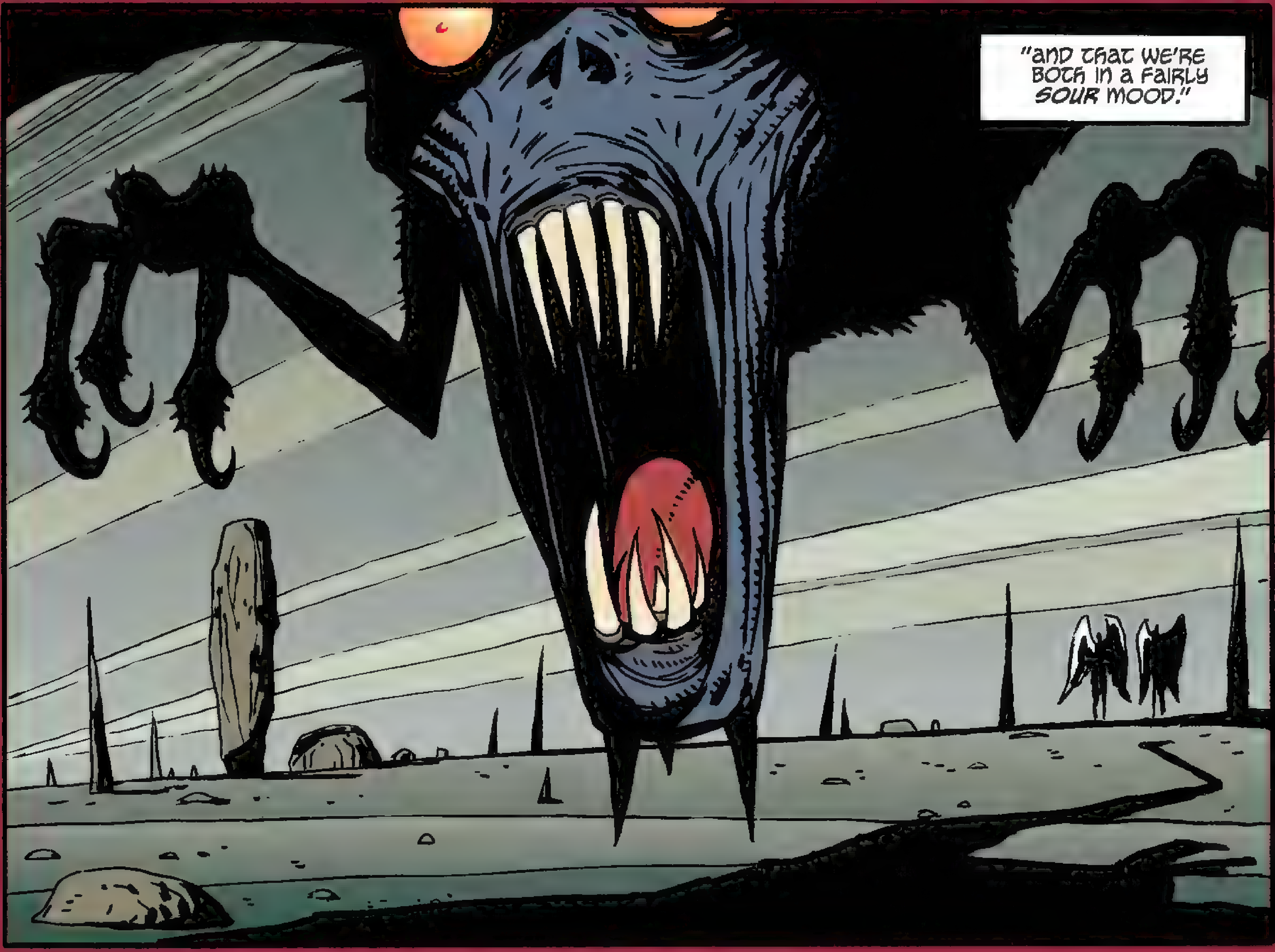
HEY, KID. GLAD YOU *MADE* IT.
WHAT?
I COULD BE OUT A FEW BUCKS ON A *BET*, BUT IT'S STILL--
GLEEP!
STOP TRYING TO *CONFUSE* ME, YOU WINDBLOWN PIECE OF SHIT.
GLEEP!
I WAS HERE *ALL* THE TIME.
IT WAS *YOU* THAT GOT LOST.
THUD
CAL LOST HIS *STAMMER*.
I *KNEW* THERE WAS SOMETHING.
COULDN'T PUT MY *FINGER* ON IT...

LUCIFER, WE ARE DIVIDING OUR ENERGIES. THE SEARCH FOR MY DAUGHTER--
--IS OUT OF OUR HANDS RIGHT NOW.
AND THIS OPPORTUNITY MAY NOT REPEAT ITSELF.
WE CAN LOOK OVER OUR FATHER'S SHOULDER FOR ONCE AND SEE WHAT HE'S WORKING TOWARDS. THAT'S WORTH A LITTLE RISK.
COULD YOU GIVE ME A MOMENT?
ZIM'ET. EITHER YOUR EYESIGHT IS GOING, OR APPEARANCES ARE DECEPTIVE--
--AND YOU'RE STOOPING LOW TO BOW BEFORE ME.
YOUR PARDON, LORD LUCIFER. I WAS IN A HUNTING FRENZY. YOU KNOW HOW IT TAKES MY KIND.
I DIDN'T RECOGNIZE YOU.


WELL, LET IT GO. ACTUALLY, THIS IS *CONVENIENT*.
YOU COULD DO ME A *FAVOR* ALONG THE ROAD A WAY.
THEN I'LL TRAVEL WITH YOU UNTIL I CAN PURGE MY *OFFENSE*, LORD.


AND THIS IS THE ARCHON *MICHAEL*, FORMERLY OF THE HOST.
I AM *STILL* OF THE HOST.
SORRY AGAIN. I HEARD YOU GOT *SHIT-CANNED*.


GO *AHEAD* OF US, ZIM'ET.
IT WILL PROBABLY SAVE US TIME AND EFFORT IF YOU LET EVERYTHING THAT LIVES HERE KNOW THAT WE'RE *COMING*.


"AND THAT WE'RE BOTH IN A FAIRLY *SOUR* MOOD."

WELL, THAT'S *PASSED.*
BUT IT *DIDN'T,* DID IT? WE STILL HAVE TO COME *BACK* THIS WAY.
COULDN'T LUCIFER HAVE *TOLD* US WHAT WE WERE GOING TO FACE?
NO. HE *COULDN'T.*
HE'S NEVER *BEEN* HERE.
SAY *WHAT* NOW?
THE MANSIONS COULD NOT *SUSTAIN* HIS PRESENCE. THEY'RE TOO FRAGILE.
THAT'S THE *ONLY* REASON HE DIDN'T COME HIMSELF.
I-- I HAVE THIS TERRIBLE SENSE OF--
I KNOW. LIKE YOU'RE TIED TO THE NOSECONE OF A *ROCKET* AND YOU LOOK DOWN AND THE ROCKET'S GOT "PROTOTYPE" ALL DOWN THE SIDE OF IT.
EXACTLY.

BUT--
--WHY?
I TOLD YOU, SWEETING. I *HATE* TO BE IDLE.
AND SYMMETRY ADDS A NEW *DIMENSION* TO YOUR BEAUTY. FLEX THE FINGERS.
OH *MY GOD!* IT *WORKS!*
IT WORKS LIKE IT'S A *PART* OF ME!
JESUS, CURLY! I CAN'T THINK OF *ANYTHING* TO SAY.
ANYTHING TO *DO*. THIS IS JUST TOO FUCKING *WONDERFUL!*
YEAH? WELL I'LL *BET* YOU COME UP WITH *SOMETHING*, YOU SCISSOR-LEGGED *SLUT*.
AND CURLY IS *MY* PET NAME FOR HIM.

IT WERE AS WELL FOR YOU TO *SPEAK*.
IF YOU SPEAK WE CAN STOP *HURTING* YOU.
WE ARE THE *ANGELIC DEAD*. THE REMNANTS OF THE FORCE THAT FOUGHT IN *HEAVEN* WHEN THE MORNINGSTAR REBELLED.
WE ARE YOUR *COUSINS*. EMBRACE US, AND BE *ONE* WITH US.
PL... PLEASE. PLEASE. IT'S M... MY *SISTER*.
HUSH NOW. HE IS SMALL AND *BROKEN* AND AFRAID.
HE HAS HELD BACK HIS KNOWLEDGE OUT OF *FEAR*. BUT WHAT *MORE* HAS HE TO FEAR NOW?
WE'RE LOOKING FOR THE GH... GH... *GHOST* OF MY SISTER.

WARM.
SOMETHING'S LIVING INSIDE THIS ROCK. DO YOU MIND IF I CATCH UP WITH YOU?
WE'LL WAIT. BUT MAKE IT QUICK.
SHE IS A DEMON.
YES. A FORMIDABLE ONE.
AND YOU'D REALLY SET HER TO GUARD US WHILE WE'RE HELPLESS?
RRRUUMMBLE
WELL, SHE'S CERTAINLY UP TO THE JOB. PHYSICALLY CAPABLE, I MEAN.
AND IT'S GOOD THAT SHE'LL HAVE A FULL STOMACH.

BUT I STILL DON'T UNDERSTAND. HOW CAN THIS THING SHOW US OUR FATHER'S THOUGHTS?
AND WHY IS IT HIDDEN HERE, IN THE REALMS OF PAIN?
YOU NEVER CHANGE, DO YOU, MICHAEL? ALWAYS THIRSTY FOR KNOWLEDGE--
--ALWAYS AFRAID THAT SOMEONE'S SPAT IN THE CUP.
WELL MAKE UP YOUR MIND, ONE WAY OR THE OTHER.
THIS IS ONE TIME WHERE PLAYING IT SAFE WON'T BE AN OPTION.
I SMELL DEATH IN THERE. BUT IT'S A FEW WEEKS OLD.
THE FORMER OWNER, SCORIA. THIS WAS HIS TOY.
AND NOW HIS TOMB. HE TRIED TO RAPE HIS WIFE, MAZIKEEN OF THE LILIM, WITH PREDICTABLE RESULTS.
AFRAID, BROTHER?
OF WHAT? THAT RAMSHACKLE MECHANISM? THIS SAD SOULLESS PLACE?
THERE'S NOTHING HERE TO FEAR.
WELL, THERE'S ALWAYS THE TRUTH.

"--OR DO YOU SEE THAT AS SOMETHING TO BE *EMBRACED?*"
THIS IS *CRAZY!* SOMEONE PROBABLY SAW US COME IN HERE.
IT MATTERS NOT WHAT THEY *SEE* OR WHAT THEY *GUESS.*
LET THEM *ENVY* US.
I CAN *FEEL* YOU THROUGH THE SILVER.
DID I NOT *TELL* YOU I WAS A SKILLFUL SMITH?
YOU'RE A GODDAMN *GENIUS.*
THAT I *AM.*
BUT MY *TRUE* VOCATION LIES ELSEWHERE.
OH
SWEET
JEEEESUS!

ALARUM OMNES! ALL OF YOU, ON *DECK!*
THERE'S SOMETHING *AHEAD* OF US!
WHATEVER IT IS, I'M GOING TO KILL IT WITH MY BARE FUCKING *HAND*.
FEAR NOT, SWEETING. IF WE MUST WAIT, WE'LL GO TO OUR *BANQUET* WITH A KEENER APPETITE.
STILL, THE LAD SOUNDS *UNHAPPY*. BEST FIND OUT WHY.

HOW FAR DOES IT *STRETCH?*
TO THE LIMITS OF *VISION*. AND THAT'S NOT ALL.
LOOK TO *STARBOARD*.
WE'VE PICKED UP AN *ESCORT*.
OH MY GOD! IT'S THOSE *SKELETON* THINGS-- BUT WE BEAT THEM BEFORE.
WE WEREN'T TRAPPED UP AGAINST A WALL OF *THORNS* BEFORE.
THIS IS WHAT THEY'VE BEEN *WAITING* FOR.
WHUMP

BACK OFF, FOR CHRISSAKES.
IT'S NOT LIKELY TO BE A FRIGGIN' *FRUIT* BASKET.
HOLY CRAP.
IT'S *HIM.* I MEAN, IT'S YOU, CAL. FUCK!
THAT'S--
--ABSURD.
THEY'RE COMING *IN.*
GIRD YOURSELVES.

WHAT *IS* THIS PLACE? IT FEELS LIKE A *SHRINE.*
IT *SHOULD.*
THESE ARE THE THOUGHTS OF *YAHWEH.* MY FATHER.
THE ARTIFICER SCORIA *DRILLED* INTO HIS MIND WITH ALCHEMICAL ENGINES, AND STORED THE *RUNOFF* HERE.
THE THOUGHTS OF *GOD.* AMAZING. MIND IF I--
YEAH, I GUESS YOU *DO.*
YOU'RE WATCHING OUR *BACKS,* REMEMBER, UNTIL WE'VE GOT WHAT WE *NEED.*
AFTER THAT YOU CAN DO WHAT YOU *LIKE.*

COMING IN?
OR DO YOU HAVE TO BE *HOME* BEFORE MIDNIGHT?
BECAUSE I RETAIN A SENSE OF DUTY TO SOMETHING BEYOND MYSELF. YOU THINK OF ME AS A FOOL.
THERE ARE NO GROUNDS ON WHICH WE CAN EVER **MEET**, LUCIFER.
SO WE MUST BE CONTENT TO PITY EACH OTHER FROM A DISTANCE.
I THINK HE WON THAT ONE.
JUST KEEP YOUR MIND ON YOUR *JOB*, ZIMET.
I DON'T WANT ANYTHING TO GET **NEAR** US.
IS THAT *USUALLY* A PROBLEM?

ELEGANTLY DONE. BUT IT WON'T *HELP*.
THEY MEAN TO *IMMOBILIZE* US.
RAM THE *THORNS*, BERGELMIR.
BUT WE DON'T KNOW HOW *THICK* THEY ARE. OR WHAT'S ON THE OTHER--
IT DOESN'T *MATTER*.
WE'VE GOT NOWHERE *ELSE* TO GO.

SO-- WHAT ARE YOU?
A DOPPELGANGER? A GHOST? AN *ACID* FLASHBACK?
SHUT UP, YOU STINKY LITTLE *BASTARD.*
OR I'LL GUT YOU MYSELF.
I'M *CAL!* MY NAME IS *CAL!* FUCK YOU ALL!
YOU GUYS ARE ALL *OVER* THE PLACE, AREN'T YOU?
BUT I'VE WORKED *CABARET.* I CAN DEAL.

AH, THE PITY OF IT.
DO NOT THINK I AM UNMOVED, MY SONS.
KKKRRAKKKKKKKk
I HAVE LIVED THESE LIVES AGAIN AND AGAIN.
I HAVE ENDURED THESE FUTILE QUESTS AND ESCALATING SACRIFICES. THE TURMOIL THAT DROWNS OUT LOVE AND HOPE AND MEANING--
--UNTIL THE HEART STOPS, AND THE LAST BREATH DIES IN THE LAST DRY THROAT.
IT IS A TRAGEDY.
ALL OF IT.

BUT THE PATTERNS PERSIST, TOO...
...PERSIST AND REPEAT THEMSELVES.
INFINITY ANSWERS INFINITY. LIKE MIRRORS FACING EACH OTHER ACROSS A NARROW HALLWAY.
I HAVE MADE WELL.
AND I MADE BEST WHEN I MADE YOU.
NOW COME INTO THE LIGHT--
--WHERE I CAN SEE YOU BOTH.

MICHAEL DEMIURGOS--SPARK THAT EXPANDS FOREVER--OCEAN OF POWER WITH NO SHORE--
--AND SAMAEL--MY SWEET, SAVAGE SAMAEL, WHO BRINGS THE LIGHT WHERE I HAVE TOLD IT TO SHINE--
--HOW I LOVE YOU, MY SONS. HOW I SWELL WITH PRIDE FOR YOU.
YOU MUST NOT TRY TO SPEAK, OR TO MOVE.
SPEECH AND ACTION ARE ALIKE IMPOSSIBLE. AND THERE IS NOTHING TO SAY, OR DO, IN ANY CASE.

NAGLFAR

PART 4 OF 5 THE DEEP

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THE SHIP?
THE SHIP HAS MISCARRIED.
AND YOUR DAUGHTER, MICHAEL-- THE ONLY CAUSE IN CREATION THAT COULD HAVE MADE YOU AND YOUR BROTHER ACT IN CONCERT--
--SHE HANGS IN THE PAVILION OF THE LANTERNS. SET THERE TO BE BOTH WORM AND HOOK.
THE THRONES ARE CAST DOWN, AND THE DOMINIONS HUMBLED.
THE KEYS TURN IN THE HEARTS OF MEN AND OF ANGELS.
ALL THINGS STAND AS I DETERMINED IN THE MORNING OF THE WORLDS.
FOR YOU ARE THE KING OF CONTRIVANCE AND MANIPULATION, MY SAMAEL. BUT IN THAT, AS IN ALL THINGS--
--YOU LEARNED FROM YOUR FATHER.

DON'T TRY TO MOVE.
MMNUH?
YOU'RE HURT.
WHAT? DON'T BE *STUPID*.
I *CAN'T* BE HURT AS LONG AS I'M CARRYING--
UH-- DID I *MISS* SOMETHING? WHO ARE YOU?
A FRIEND.
MY NAME IS EIKON.
I COUNT THREE DEAD, BUT THEY'RE NOT OF THE *MUSTER*.
IS EVERYONE ELSE *ALIVE*, AND ABLE TO WALK?

I CAN PLEAD GUILTY TO THE *FIRST,* CAPTAIN.
BUT I MAY HAVE TO *DISAPPOINT* YOU ON THE SECOND.
DEAR GOD! LOOK! I--I'VE GOT MY *BODY* BACK! I'M ALIVE!
FRUSTRATION. CONFUSION. PANIC.
YEAH, THANKS, SPERA. WALKING'S OUT FOR US TOO, BUT WE CAN *BOB.*
IT'S THE NATURE OF THIS PLACE. SPIRIT HAS *FORM* HERE, AND FORM HAS *SUBSTANCE.*
DOUBTLESS THERE WILL BE OTHER, MORE *PROFOUND* TRANSFORMATIONS.
SO THESE ARE THE *GHOSTS* FROM THE BLACK BEAD-- GIVEN NEW *BODIES* JUST IN TIME TO DIE AS WE HIT THE GROUND.
AND YOU--?
I AM EIKON. I SAW WHAT HAPPENED AND CAME TO *HELP* YOU.
HEY.
ARE WE A MAN *DOWN?*

I'M NOT *REAL.*
I'M NOT *ME.*
YOU CAME FROM THIS SHARD OF *MIRROR?* FROM ONE OF THE *OTHER* CREATIONS?
I THINK SO. YES.
I WAS *DRAWN* HERE. I DON'T KNOW WHY.
PROBABLY BECAUSE OUR *OWN* CAL WAS MISSING.
AND NOW HE'S *DEAD.* SO WHAT AM I?
WHAT *ARE* YOU? I'LL TELL YOU.
YOU'RE A CREWMAN. AND I NEED YOU.
SO PULL YOURSELF *TOGETHER.*

OH JEEZ. THIS GOT FUCKED UP REALLY *FAST*, DIDN'T IT?
IT WAS THAT WAY TO *BEGIN* WITH, JILL.
IT'S UNLIKELY TO END *WELL* FOR ANY OF US.
I WAS HOPING-- Y'KNOW, THAT YOU'D GET TO FINISH THAT *SPEECH* ABOUT YOUR TRUE VOCATION...
...WITH YOUR VOICE REALLY, REALLY *MUFFLED*.
HA! YOU SEE, SWEETING, I AM AS SLY AS MY *BROTHER*, LOKI.
WHEN YOU'VE FOUND ELAINE, YOU MUST COME *BACK* TO ME--OR ELSE GO UNSATISFIED.
WHO IS HE?
JUST A *GOD* I MET.
WHAT'S IT TO YOU, JIMINY CRICKET?

WE HEAD THAT WAY. WITH THE *FIRE* AT OUR BACKS.
IT'S THE LINE THE *NAGLFAR* WAS ON WHEN SHE FELL.
AND YOU SAY YOU *LIVE* HERE?
OH YES. MY HOME IS VERY CLOSE BY.
I'LL *GUIDE* YOU, IF YOU ALLOW IT.
WHEN THE FIRE DIES, THOSE THINGS WILL TRY TO *FOLLOW* US.
BUT THEY'LL CHECK THE *WRECKAGE* FIRST.
AND THESE *SCRAPINGS* AND I WILL SHOW THEM SUCH ENTERTAINMENT AS WE CAN.
WE'LL SEE YOU WHEN WE *RETURN*, BERGELMIR.
AYE. DOUBTLESS.
DON'T LOOK AT ME LIKE *THAT*, COUSINS.
IT MAKES ME WANT TO PREACH A *SERMON*.

FIRST OF ALL, MY SONS, YOU SHOULD KNOW THIS.
THAT I DID NOT NEED YOU.
THE FIRST FLOWER OF LIGHT COULD HAVE BEEN BORN WITHOUT A SEED.
I HAD PLAYED IT THROUGH A THOUSAND TIMES. I KNEW ITS GROWTH AND DECAY TO A NICETY.
AND THERE WAS NO NEED FOR A WEAVER TO SPIN THE LIGHT INTO SUNS.
IT WAS PREGNANT ALREADY WITH THE FORMS WHICH IT WOULD BECOME.
BUT I HAD TO TEACH YOU YOUR SKILLS.
AND THERE WAS NO OTHER SCHOOL.

THEN CAME THE HOST, AND THE SILVER CITY.
AND IF THEY WERE NEEDED, IT WAS ONLY BECAUSE I HAD CREATED YOU.
HOW WOULD YOU LOOK UPON YOURSELVES IF YOU HAD NO PEERS? NO CONTEXT FOR YOUR ACTIONS?
NO MIRRORS INTO WHICH TO GAZE?
AND HOW COULD YOU HEAD-- OR HEAD OFF--
--A REBELLION IF THERE WERE NONE TO FOLLOW YOUR BANNERS?
THERE IS A REASON FOR EVERYTHING I DO.
I ABHOR WASTE.
YES, MICHAEL. THE REBELLION WAS THE POINT. BUT YOU WERE SO SLOW TO ANGER--
--SO RELUCTANT EVEN TO QUESTION THAT I ALMOST DESPAIRED.
WHILE SAMAEL HAS SQUANDERED ETERNITY IN TRYING TO ESCAPE FROM THE PLAN, WHICH OF COURSE FORESAW EVERYTHING HE DID.
UNTIL NOW.

YOU SEE, MY CHILDREN?
IT IS A BUBBLE OF GLASS THAT I BLEW, AND THE CLOSURE MAKES IT PERFECT.
BUT THERE ARE TWO WAYS TO CLOSE THE CIRCLE OF ETERNITY.
AND THE ONLY UNCERTAIN THING, IN ALL THE FROZEN COLONNADES OF CERTAINTY DOWN WHICH I HAVE STARED FOR SO LONG--
--THE ONLY MATTER ON WHICH THERE HAS EVER BEEN THE SMALLEST MOLECULE OF DOUBT--
--HAS BEEN WHICH OF THE TWO I WOULD FINALLY CHOOSE.
NOW YOU KNOW.

OOP!
IT'S ALL RIGHT.
I'VE GOT YOU.
LISTEN, WHAT *IS* THIS? YOU'RE HANGING AROUND ME LIKE BODY ODOR.
DO I *KNOW* YOU?
YOU HAVE NEVER SEEN MY FACE. BUT YOU *WILL* KNOW ME.
IN THE FULLNESS OF TIME--
--YOU ARE TO BE MY MOTHER.
OH JEEZUS!

DO NOT RECOIL FROM ME. THE *MAGIC* OF THIS PLACE HAS SHEATHED ME IN FLESH.
BUT WE ARE ONE *SOUL*, MOTHER.
GET THE FUCK *AWAY* FROM ME!
I WAS *RAPED* BY A DECK OF FUCKING TAROT CARDS!
I CAME *HERE* TO GET RID OF YOU-- YOU THINK YOU CAN MELT MY HEART BY CALLING ME *"MOM"*?
BUT YOU ARE MY *LIFE* NOW. AND I AM *YOURS*.
I BREATHE YOUR BREATH. I FEED ON YOUR HEARTBEAT. YOU CANNOT *KILL* ME.
YOU SEE?
YES. YES, I THINK I--
WE ARE BOUND TOGETHER IN A UNION NONE CAN BREAK.
AMBIVALENCE. CONFUSION. SUSPICION. CONFLICT. UNCERTAINTY.
WHAT?
GO AWAY, BUBBLE OF NOTHING, BEFORE I *PRICK* YOU.

I *LOVE* YOU, MOTHER. AND YOU LOVE ME.
LET'S JOIN THE *OTHERS* NOW, AND SEE--
UUH!
YOU LITTLE *BASTARD!*
LIKE FATHER LIKE *SON, EH?* AGAIN WITH THE SLEAZY FUCKING JEDI *MIND* CONTROL.
WELL LOOK AT *THIS*, YOU FUCKER.
IT'S A *BRUISE*. I GOT IT WHEN THE NAGLFAR CRASH-LANDED.
THE SPELL OF *PROTECTION?* I THINK WE CAN SAFELY SAY IT DOESN'T *WORK* AROUND HERE.
SO IF YOU MESS WITH MY *HEAD* AGAIN--
--I'LL RIP YOU OUT OF MY STOMACH WITH MY BARE FUCKING *HANDS!*

HEY.
DON'T LOOK NOW, BUT WE JUST USED UP OUR *LEAD TIME.*
WALK ON.
GET AS FAR *AWAY* FROM ME AS YOU CAN.
HE SAID HE WOULD *RELEASE* YOU INTO DEATH.
THIS IS THE *HOUSE* OF THE DEAD.
AND YOU ARE *FREE.*

YO, MAZI-- WHY DIDN'T YOU DO THAT WAY THE FUCK BACK *THERE*, WHEN WE HAD A SHIP?
IT WAS A LAST *RESORT.*
IT MIGHT EASILY HAVE CHOSEN TO FEED ON *US.*

PLOOF PLOOF PLOOF
MICHAEL!
YOU LOOK *WIPED.* HERE, LET ME GIVE YOU A HAND.
DO NOT... TOUCH ME, DEMON.
DO NOT **ADDRESS** ME.
ALL MY LIFE I HAVE **OBEYED** HIM. AND FOR THAT I HAVE HIS **PITY?**
I MUST BE TORMENTED AND HARRIED INTO FOLLOWING **LUCIFER'S** EXAMPLE?
WELL IT IS **ENOUGH!**

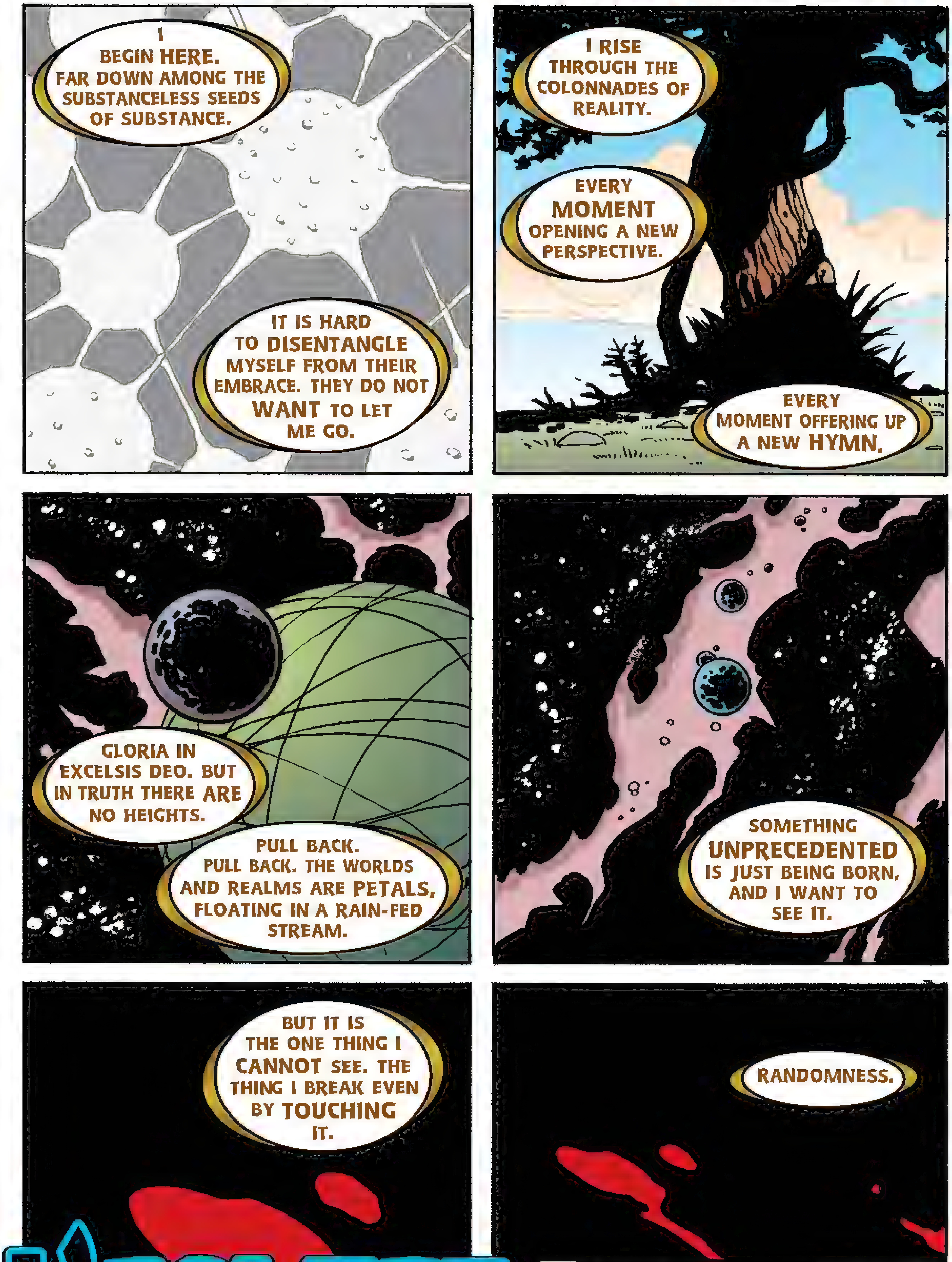
THERE.
I WANTED TO BE SURE I HADN'T *MISSED* ANYTHING.

AH... AH...AH... AH!
I SEE THEM. HUSH NOW.
I SET YOU UP SO HIGH TO TEMPT THIEVES, NOT WARN ME OF THEM.
MY GREETINGS TO YOU, TRAVELERS.
WHAT IS IT THAT YOU SEEK?
THE SPIRIT OF A HUMAN CHILD.
THERE ARE MANY THOUSANDS OF SPIRITS HERE. I USE THEM FOR DECORATION, AS YOU CAN SEE.
TO FIND ONE AMONG SO MANY WOULD BE HARD.
DO YOU OBJECT TO OUR LOOKING?
OH YES, MAZIKEEN, DAUGHTER OF OPHUR.
TSUKI-YOMI OBJECTS MOST STRENUOUSLY.

I can't take you any further. I need to be somewhere *else*.
I'll be *fine*. Lucifer--
--Something's *happened*, hasn't it? Something *big*?
It could be really useful for me to be ahead of the *game* on this one.
It's really a *family* matter.
You mean it only concerns--
I mean it's not something I'm prepared to *discuss*.
But if you want some *advice*, Zim'et, I'd say to choose a direction that leads *away* from the Silver City.
Set off now, and keep moving until the *stars* start to dim.

"BECAUSE ON THE FACE OF IT--
"--THIS CHANGES EVERYTHING."
YOU INTEND TO STAND IN THE WAY OF OUR SEARCH?
I AM DETERMINED ON IT.
IT WAS THE PROJECT I SET MYSELF, ONCE I ACCEPTED THE FACT OF MY DEATH.
IN THE ORDINARY WAY OF THINGS, GODS PASS GENTLY AND WITHOUT PAIN INTO NON-EXISTENCE.
BUT LUCIFER HAD DISPOSAL OF MY FATE.
AND SINCE HE DENIED ME THAT PEACE, IT SEEMED FITTING TO DENY HIM SOMETHING IN RETURN.
THE LINK BETWEEN HER SPIRIT AND HIS IS VERY STRONG.
I KNEW THAT HE WOULD SEARCH FOR HER. NOT IN HIS OWN PERSON, OF COURSE. HE CANNOT COME HERE.
BUT HE WOULD SEND PROXIES AND I WOULD FRUSTRATE THEM. AS MANY TIMES AS--
WELL YOU'RE DEAD ALREADY--
--AT LEAST THIS WILL COME AS NO SURPRISE.
AH.

I SHOULD HAVE *WARNED* YOU, DAUGHTER OF OPHUR. *ALL* THINGS IN MY GARDEN HAVE BEEN FASHIONED BY MY HANDS.
I TOOK ESPECIAL *CARE* WITH THE LAWS OF CAUSALITY.
I KNEW YOU WERE *COMING*. SO AGAIN, I HAVE BEEN VERY *CLEVER* AND ARTFUL--
--BUT IT IS NOT *POIGNANT.*
PAIN IS MY MEDIUM, AS PERHAPS YOU GUESSED.
YOU'RE ALL MOST *WELCOME* HERE.


I BEGIN HERE. FAR DOWN AMONG THE SUBSTANCELESS SEEDS OF SUBSTANCE.
IT IS HARD TO DISENTANGLE MYSELF FROM THEIR EMBRACE. THEY DO NOT WANT TO LET ME GO.
I RISE THROUGH THE COLONNADES OF REALITY.
EVERY MOMENT OPENING A NEW PERSPECTIVE.
EVERY MOMENT OFFERING UP A NEW HYMN.
GLORIA IN EXCELSIS DEO. BUT IN TRUTH THERE ARE NO HEIGHTS.
PULL BACK. PULL BACK. THE WORLDS AND REALMS ARE PETALS, FLOATING IN A RAIN-FED STREAM.
SOMETHING UNPRECEDENTED IS JUST BEING BORN, AND I WANT TO SEE IT.
BUT IT IS THE ONE THING I CANNOT SEE. THE THING I BREAK EVEN BY TOUCHING IT.
RANDOMNESS.

NAGLFAR

CONCLUSION: FULL FATHOM FIVE

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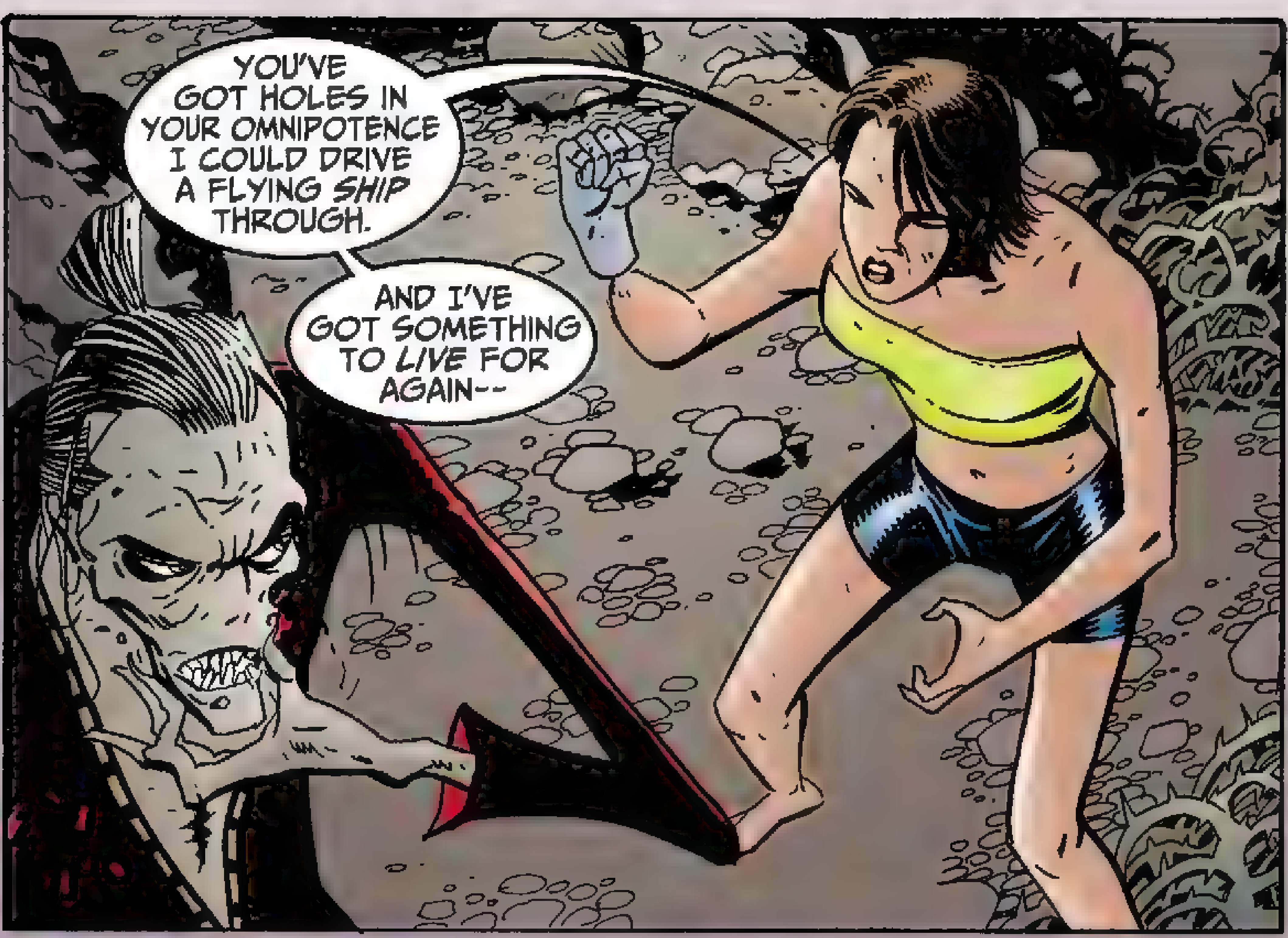
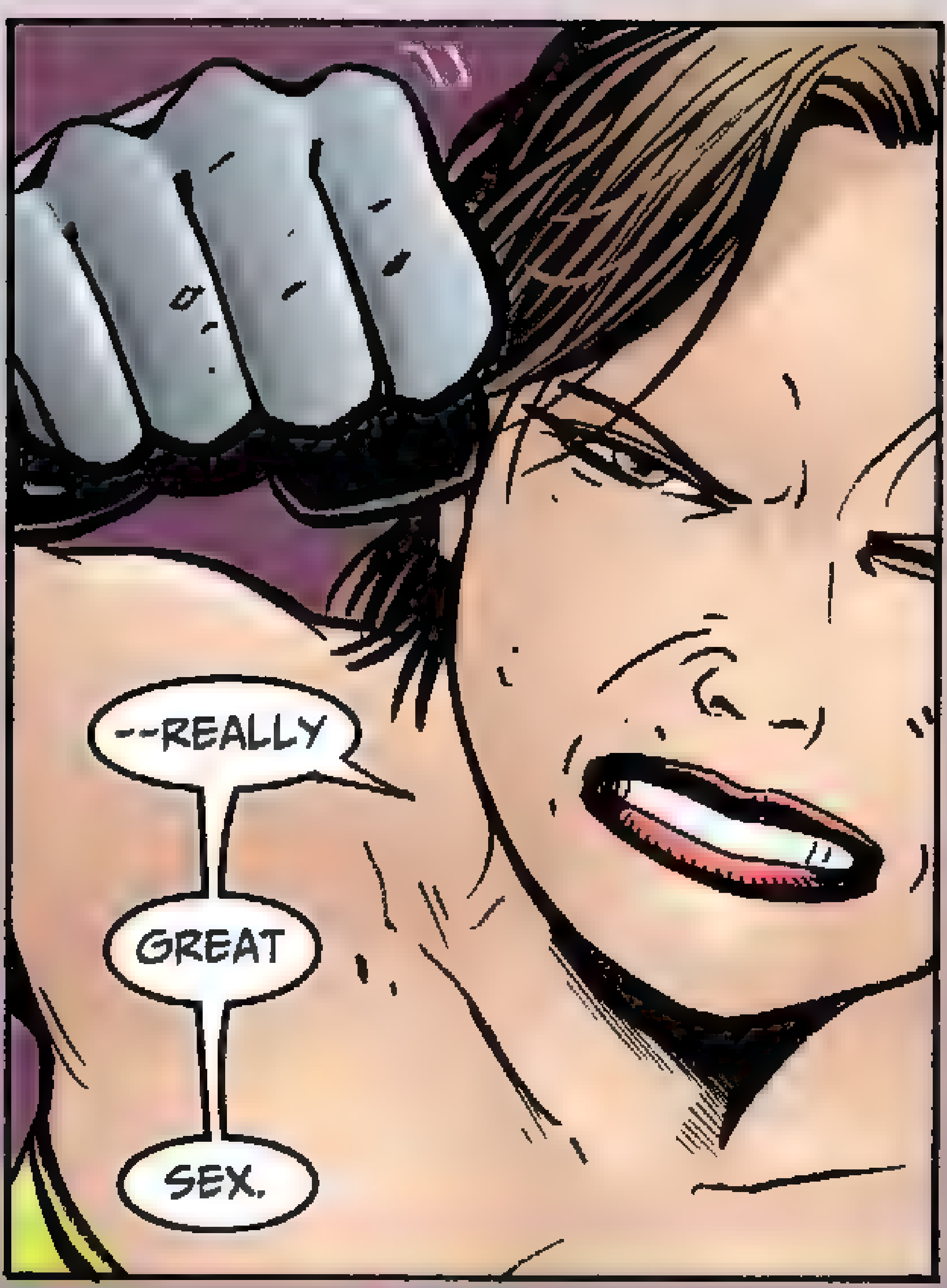
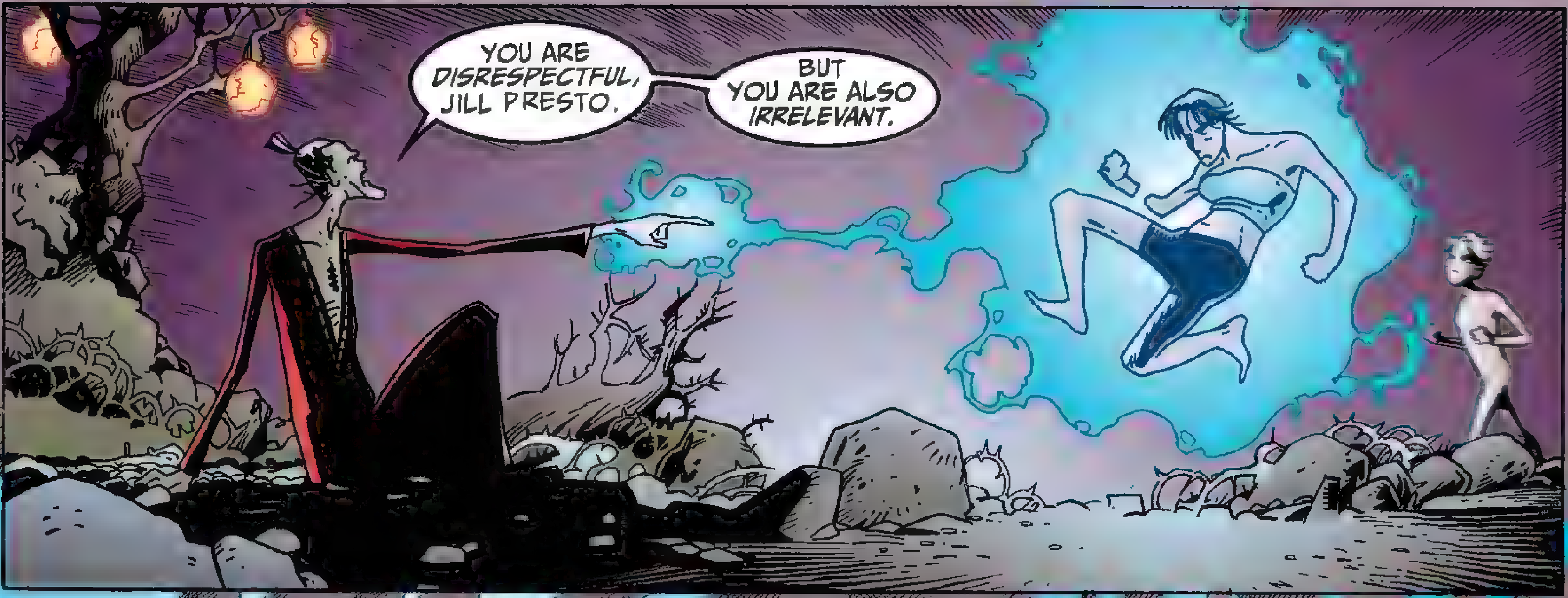
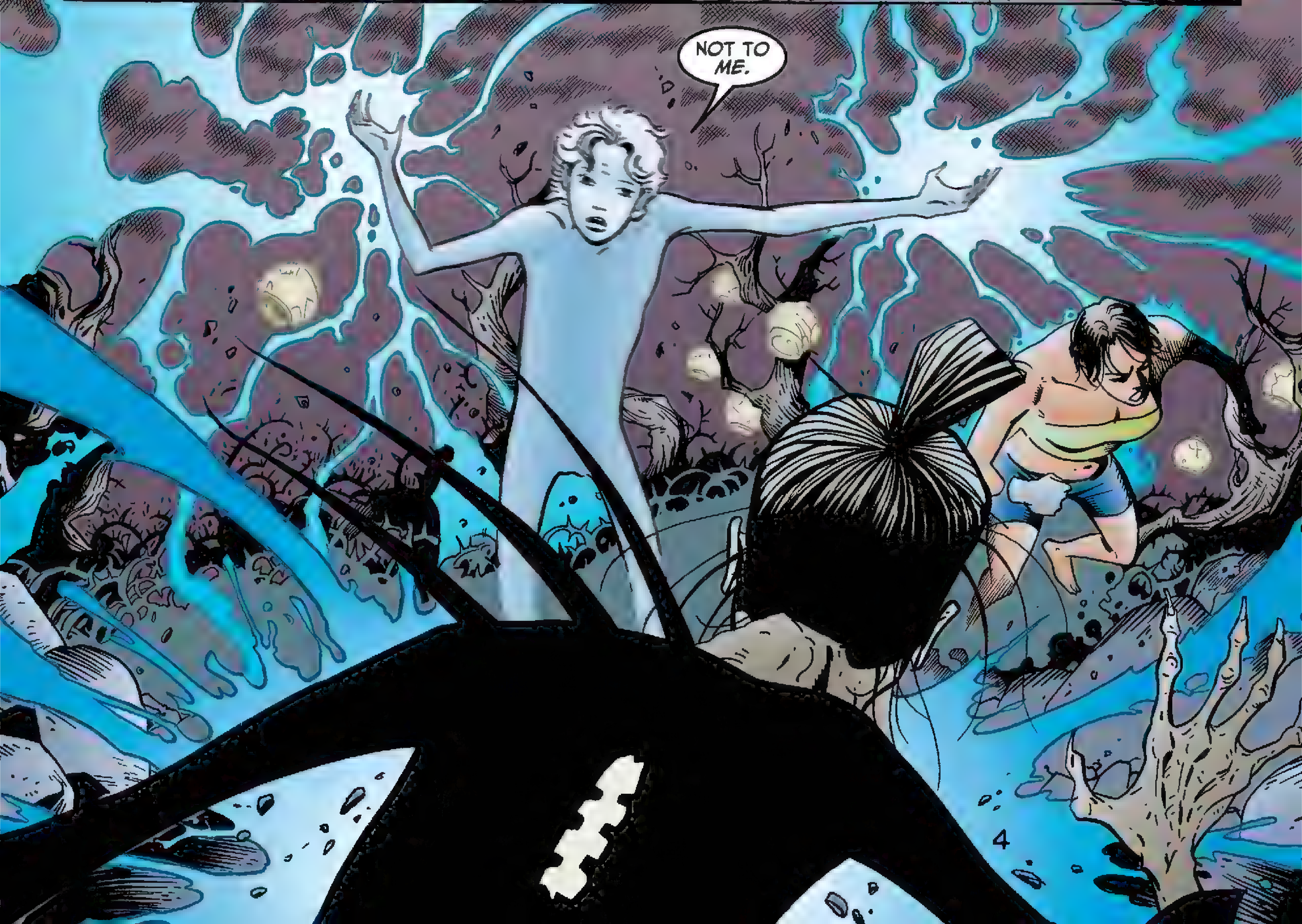
WHERE IS MY *DAUGHTER?* WHAT HAVE YOU *DONE* WITH HER?
YOU NEVER *HAD* A DAUGHTER. ONLY THE *ILLUSION* OF ONE.
AND NOW YOU WILL LOSE EVEN *THAT,* DAVID EASTERMAN.
YOU! YOU'RE *DEAD!*
YOU'RE A *DEAD* MAN!
NO. I HAVE *EXPLAINED* THIS.

I AM A DEAD GOD.
AND THIS IS MY *HEAVEN*.
YOU THREE--YOU DO NOT *INTEREST* ME.
TWO OF YOU HAVE NO FLESH, AND THE THIRD IS ALREADY *DEAD*.
CONFUSION. FEAR. DESSSP...
DESPAIR. YES. WHY NOT?
WHUMP
WHUMP
I'LL *TELL* YOU WHY NOT.
THWUCK!


YOU'VE GOT HOLES IN YOUR OMNIPOTENCE I COULD DRIVE A FLYING *SHIP* THROUGH.
AND I'VE GOT SOMETHING TO *LIVE* FOR AGAIN--


--REALLY
GREAT
SEX.


YOU ARE *DISRESPECTFUL,* JILL PRESTO.
BUT YOU ARE ALSO *IRRELEVANT.*


NOT TO *ME.*

"I HAVE FACED YOU BEFORE--
"--AND SWALLOWED INSULTS AT YOUR HANDS."
BUT TODAY I AM IN A DIFFERENT HUMOR.
STEP ASIDE OR YOU WILL SURELY DIE.
ARCHON, WE HAVE OUR ORDERS. *NOBODY* ENTERS THE PRESENCE WITHOUT YOUR FATHER'S SUMMONS.
NOT EVEN *YOU.*
THEN BE AT PEACE. YOU DIE IN FULFILLMENT OF YOUR DUTY.
THAT WAS MY AMBITION ONCE.
I HAVE LEARNED HARD LESSONS SINCE.

"I USED TO BELIEVE IN THE RULES YAHWEH MADE. BUT I ALSO FOUND A KIND OF JOY IN OBEDIENCE ITSELF.
"AS THOUGH OBEDIENCE WERE A SACRAMENT.
"I NEVER KNEW WHAT MY BROTHER LUCIFER KNEW.
"THE INVISIBLE FISSURE OF DOUBT THAT OPENS A VISTA ON TO NEW CERTAINTIES.
"THE FAINT WHISPERING OF QUESTIONS THAT STIR UP THE DUST OF AGES.
"BUT I AM MUCH CHANGED. AND I WELCOME THE CHANGE.
"I HAVE SEEN THE LIGHT."

YOU...
...MAY NOT...
...TOUCH HER.
WHY? BECAUSE SHE'S THE VESSEL YOU *SAIL* IN?
SHE IS OUR... *MOTHER.*
WE ARE TO BE... *BORN*...FROM HER FLESH.
WELL, I HAVE HEARD THAT THE *DEVIL* LAUGHS--
--WHEN WE MAKE *PLANS.*
FWOOOSH

IF YOU HAD COME INTO YOUR *HERITAGE*--
--AND IF WE HAD MET ON SOME *OTHER* GROUND-- IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN DIFFERENT.
SHIT...
THERE MIGHT HAVE BEEN MORE OF *GRANDEUR* TO THIS--
--AND LESS OF *PATHOS*.
BUT HAVE NO *FEAR*.
ART WILL TRANSFORM YOU INTO SOMETHING *MEANINGFUL*.

MICHAEL, PLEASE. *THINK* OF WHAT YOU'RE DOING. THE ENTIRE *HOST* WILL RALLY TO THIS PLACE.
YOU WILL CONDEMN THEM TO *DEATH*, BECAUSE WHILE THEY ARE ALIVE THEY WILL *DEFEND* THE THRONE AND THE PRESENCE.
I HAVE NO WISH TO KILL ANY OF YOU, URIEL. BUT I INTEND TO SPEAK WITH MY FATHER.
WE WILL BOTH OF US DO WHAT WE MUST.
ARCHON, STAY YOUR *HAND*!
THERE IS NO *NEED* FOR THIS! LOOK!
LOOK!
HIS DOOR STANDS *OPEN*!

WHAT'S THIS ABOUT?
WE MOURN OUR DEAD, COUSIN.
THOSE WHO DIED THE FINAL DEATH WHEN WE ATTACKED THE SHIP.
AND WHICH WAY DID THE SHIP GO?
ONWARDS. INWARDS. WHO CAN SAY? BUT IT SEEMS I SHOULD KNOW YOU, COUSIN.
WERE YOU THERE WHEN WE FOUGHT THE REBEL LUCIFER?
I WAS THERE.
I THOUGHT SO.
AND WHAT IS THAT THING THAT RUNS SO CLOSE BEHIND YOU?
THAT'S THE END OF THE WORLD.
THANKS FOR YOUR TIME.

THE EYE OF A *NEEDLE* HAS AN SYMBOLIC FORCE.
THERE IS, FOR EXAMPLE, A *SCRIPTURAL* TEXT IN WHICH IT IS MADE TO REPRESENT THE GATE OF HEAVEN.
A VERY *AMUSING* CONCEIT.
AND THEN, OF COURSE, THERE IS THE *HEAD* OF THE NEEDLE.
THAT, TOO, HAS A *THEOLOGICAL* SIGNIFICANCE.
FOR ON THE HEAD OF A NEEDLE--
--ANGELS CAN BE MADE TO *DANCE.*

STILL WATCHING?
NO. BUT I CAN HEAR YOU, FOR A MOMENT OR TWO MORE.
WAS THERE ANYTHING YOU WISHED TO SAY TO ME, MY SON?
WHAT WOULD BE THE POINT?
WE'RE NOT CAPABLE OF LEARNING FROM EACH OTHER.

GOOD... MORROW TO YOU... LUCIFER MORNINGSTAR.
YOU FIND ME... AT SOMETHING OF A *DISADVANTAGE.*
I can *see* that, BERGELMIR.
I don't have *time* to cut you down.
This is going to *hurt.*
LAY ON.
IT WOULD BE DEMEANING... TO DIE WHERE NO WOMEN... COULD *WEEP* ON MY GRAVE.

WHAT IS *THIS?*
A PIECE OF SOMEWHERE *ELSE,* SHINING IN MY GARDEN?
IS THERE A *MEANING* TO THIS, SPAWN OF THE BASANOS?
SPEAK.
GUUUUH!
A... B... BEAC... BEACON...
BUT THERE IS *NOBODY* TO--

UKKHH!
HEY, LOOK! NORMAL SERVICE HAS BEEN RESUMED!
WELL THANK FUCK FOR THAT.
THE SHIP! BERGELMIR BROUGHT THE SHIP.
OH. IT'S YOU.
BUT I THOUGHT YOU COULDN'T--
THE RULES OF ENGAGEMENT HAVE CHANGED.

THOUSANDS--
--THOUSANDS OF SOULS--
Then let's do this the easy way, Mazikeen.
Come to me, Elaine Belloc.
Now.

BERGELMIR IS ALREADY ON BOARD.
COME NOW IF YOU'RE COMING AT ALL.
YOU HEARD THE MAN--
--LET'S GET THE FUCK OUT OF HERE.

MOTHER--
PLEASE--
IT'S *YOUR* CHOICE.
I SWORE NOT TO HARM HIM. I SAID NOTHING ABOUT RUNNING A RESCUE SERVICE.
THEN LET THE LITTLE FUCKER *BLEED.*

"THROUGH THE LAND OF THE GODDAMN *GIANTS*-- OUT THE WRONG SIDE OF *HEAVEN*--
"--DOING THE OWL AND THE *PUSSYCAT* ROUTINE WITH ANGELS AND GHOSTS AND GODS AND FUCK KNOWS WHAT *ELSE*.
"I MEAN, I GOT WHAT I *WANTED*. I'M NOT COMPLAINING.
"BUT IT WAS A HELL OF A LONG WAY TO COME FOR AN *ABORTION*."
IT'S GONE.
IT'S--IT'S ALL JUST GONE. HOW COULD THAT *HAPPEN?*

THOSE ARE HIS HANDS! FOR *GOD'S* SAKE, BE CAREFUL!
ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT ANY *PARTICULAR* GOD, OR ARE YOU JUST MOUTHING OFF?
GUUUH!
CRAZY WORLD.
WHERE DO DEAD ANGELS GET GALVANIZED SIX-INCHES?
LUCIFER, WHAT HAVE YOU *DONE?*
WHAT I *HAD* TO DO. THE MANSIONS OF SILENCE WERE A FRAGILE STRUCTURE.
THEY WERE NEVER *MEANT* TO SUPPORT MY PRESENCE.
BUT-- THE BEINGS THAT *DWELLED* THERE. UNTOLD *BILLIONS* OF THEM.
GONE.
MONSTROUS! YOUR FATHER WILL NOT *LET* YOU WALK AWAY FROM THIS!
YOU THINK NOT?
WE'LL *SEE.*

WHAT SHOULD WE *DO*, URIEL?
WHAT *CAN* WE DO? ONLY WAIT?
WHEN MICHAEL COMES FORTH AGAIN, WE WILL *CLOSE* THE DOORS.
NOW *READY* YOURSELVES, SERAPHS.
BUT DO NOTHING TO *ANGER* HIM.
IS YOUR BUSINESS HERE *DONE*, ARCHON?
WHAT? YES. OF COURSE IT IS.
AS IS YOUR OWN, URIEL.
THE PRIMUM MOBILE IS EMPTY. GOD HAS DEPARTED THIS PLACE.
FOREVER.
The End

THE MAKER HAS A *SHIP* THAT SAILS BETWEEN THE WORLDS.
SOME CALL THIS FANTASY, BUT WE OF THE *ESA* KNOW IT FOR COLD FACT.
FOR ONE DAY, WHEN MY MOTHER'S MOTHER WAS PICKING *SIMPLES* JUST BEFORE DAWN ON THE RIDGE OF COALS--
--THERE CAME A *SOUND* LOUDER THAN THUNDER, AND A LIGHT PALER THAN *FIRE*.
IT WAS THE *MAKER*.
THE MAKER HAD COME IN HIS GREAT SKYSHIP.
AND HE HAD BROUGHT THE *SISTERS* TO US.

SISTERS of MERCY

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WELL THAT WAS A WHOLE FESTERING *HEAP* OF FUN.
WE SHOULD DO THIS *EVERY* YEAR.
OUR BUSINESS WITH EACH OTHER SEEMS TO BE *CONCLUDED*.
BERGELMIR, THE *NAGLFAR* IS YOURS AGAIN. THANKS FOR THE LOAN.
YOU'VE DONE A TERRIBLE *THING*, MORNINGSTAR.
I STILL BELIEVE THAT YOU'LL BE BROUGHT TO *PAY* FOR IT, ONE WAY OR ANOTHER.
WELL, *BELIEF* IS MEANT TO BE A GREAT CONSOLATION.
TAKE IT *WITH* YOU WHEN YOU GO.
SO HEY, DID YOU HAPPEN TO SEE WHERE MICHAEL WENT?
YOU KNOW, WHEN YOU GUYS WERE DONE WITH... WHATEVER?
TO THE SILVER CITY.
BUT I'D GIVE HIM SOME ROOM TO SULK IN, IF I WERE YOU.

That's the TROUBLE with QUESTS.
Even IF they're SUCCESSFUL--
--they always end in an ANTICLIMAX.
EARRRRRGHHHHH!
IT'S OKAY, MONA. WE'RE SAFE NOW.
AHUH! AHUH! AHUH!
EVERYTHING'S GOING TO BE ALL RIGHT.
EVERYTHING'S GOING TO BE FINE.

YOU SAVED US ALL.
I SAVED *YOU.*
I OWED YOU A LIFE. I *DISLIKE* HAVING THAT HANGING OVER ME.
YOU HAVE A NUMBER OF *OPTIONS,* ELAINE. I CAN GIVE YOU BACK THE BODY THAT YOU *HAD.*
OR YOU CAN BE BORN INTO A *NEW* ONE--AND START AGAIN WITH NO *MEMORY* OF ALL THIS.
HOW LONG HAVE I BEEN *DEAD?*
A LITTLE MORE THAN A MONTH.
THEN THERE'S ALREADY BEEN-- A *FUNERAL* AND EVERYTHING?
OF COURSE.
I'D LIKE TO *THINK* ABOUT IT FOR A WHILE...
...IF YOU DON'T *MIND.*

THE MAKER WENT BACK TO HIS *SKYSHIP*, MY GRANDMOTHER SAID.
WHERE A LADY OF GREAT *BEAUTY* WAS LYING, WOUNDED UNTO DEATH.
Mazikeen.
AND HE MADE A GREAT LIGHT OF HIS WILL, AND COMPASSION, TO GUIDE HER SPIRIT HOME FROM WHERE IT WANDERED.
MAKING HER *WHOLE*.
I FAILED YOU.
No. You did everything you *needed* to do.
I just came in to *finish* off.
Events have moved *on*.
I'll need to *update* you.

I DON'T SEE WHAT'S TO *THINK* ABOUT, ELAINE.
DON'T YOU?
WE CAN BE *ALIVE* AGAIN! WE CAN BE REAL!
I MEAN, IT'S OKAY FOR YOU. *YOU* CAN GO OFF TO *HEAVEN* AND BE AN ANGEL.
I JUST GET TO BE *DEAD*. A SORT OF *BALLOON* WITHOUT A STRING.
IT SUCKS.
IT'S -- I DON'T THINK IT'S THAT *EASY*, MONA.
are you *ready* now?
NO. NOT REALLY.
I JUST DON'T *KNOW*. IF I COME BACK TO LIFE--
--AREN'T PEOPLE GONNA START ASKING *QUESTIONS*?
LET THEM *ASK*.
memory is more *malleable* than you think.
But if that *bothers* you, then begin again. It's all one to me.

BUT THEN I WOULDN'T REMEMBER BEING *ME.*
I CAN'T EVEN REMEMBER WHAT *CORN FLAKES* TASTE LIKE.
SO I WAS WONDERING--
COULD WE--MAYBE--GO BACK HOME FOR JUST A *LITTLE* WHILE. LIKE A *DAY?*
OH YES!
a trial period?
JUST TO REMIND US WHAT IT WAS LIKE. IT FEELS A LOT *LONGER* THAN A MONTH.
OH PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE! THAT'D BE SO GREAT!
THIS IS BEGINNING TO IRRITATE ME.
USE THE GATE OVER THERE. YOU HAVE THREE HOURS.
WHAT IF WE'RE *LATE?*
THE BORROWED *FLESH* I'M GIVING YOU WILL LAST UNTIL THAT TIME IS UP.
IF YOU'RE LATE--

"--I WON'T COME LOOKING FOR YOU A *SECOND* TIME."
COME ON, COME ON, COME ON!
OH MY GOD! S CLUB 7 HAS TURNED INTO *S CLUB 4!*
HOW LONG WAS I DEAD, A HUNDRED *YEARS?*
I'VE NEVER *HEARD* OF HALF THESE BANDS. TATU? GIRLS ALOUD?
OLWORTH
TATU IS PRETTY GOOD.
TATU
COME ON, MONA.
WE'VE ONLY GOT THREE HOURS.
YOU GO AHEAD. I'M GONNA *LISTEN* TO SOME OF THIS STUFF.
BUT -- DON'T YOU WANT TO GO *HOME?*
ORTH
ARE YOU *KIDDING?*
I'LL MEET YOU AT THE *GATE.*
BUT DO YOU EVEN KNOW THE--?
OF *COURSE* I DO. SEE YA!

BISHOP LAUD
NAH, JET LI JUST GOES LIKE THIS, AND LIKE THIS. LIKE HE'S SCARED OF BEING *HIT*.
HE DOES *NOT*. ANYWAY, AT LEAST HE DIDN'T GET MADE INTO A *CARTOON*. JACKIE CHAN IS--
...
HEY! HEY, PICKFORD! YOU'RE NOT S'POSED TO RUN, *REMEMBER?*
YOU'LL BUST YOUR *STOMACH* OPEN AGAIN!

ELAINE! *HUF! HUF!*
HI, BARRY!
OH MY GOD, YOU'RE NOT DEAD! YOU'RE NOT *DEAD!*
IT'S A LONG STORY.
IT'S SO GOOD TO *SEE* YOU. HOW'VE YOU BEEN? HOW'S SARAH?
UMM... SARAH'S STILL IN THE *HOSPITAL.*
THEY'VE REINFLATED HER *LUNG,* BUT SHE'S GOT TO SLEEP IN AN OXYGEN TENT.
OH GOD. THAT'S *AWFUL.*
BARRY, I MIGHT NOT SEE YOU AGAIN AFTER THIS. SO I WANTED TO SAY THANKS--FOR TRYING TO *PROTECT* ME.
AND *SORRY* FOR WHAT--FOR EVERYTHING THAT--
OH, THIS IS HOPELESS.
JUST MOVE OUT OF THE *WAY* FOR A SECOND.
HSSSSSSSS

ELAINE! THOSE ARE--
I'LL *MISS* YOU, BARRY. I'LL REALLY MISS YOU.
THOSE ARE WINGS ON YOUR...
ONE FOR *YOU.*
AND ONE FOR *SARAH.*
PICKFORD, YOU GOT AN *ANGEL.*
WHAT'LL YOU *SWAP* 'ER FOR?
YEAH.

"I'LL BE YOUR ANGEL," BY KIRA. HAH!
I OUGHTA GET THAT ONE FOR ELAINE.
VEEVEEVEEVEEVEEVEEVEE
OW!
STUPID DOOR. IT'S SUPPOSED TO BE AUTOMATIC!
VEEVEEVEEVEEVEEVEEVEE
IT IS AUTOMATIC, MISSIE.
AND RIGHT NOW IT'S AUTOMATICALLY STAYING SHUT.
VEEVEEVEEVEEVEEVEEVEE
GOT 'ER, HARRIET. RESET THE ALARM, YEAH?
COME ON, MISSIE. LET'S TALK.

--OR ARE THERE OCCASIONS WHEN EVEN MURDER IS JUSTIFIED?
YES! FUCKING YES!
ON TODAY'S MORAL MAZE WE'LL ASK THE ARCHBISHOP OF YORK WHAT--
YOU.
I WAS HOPING TO SEE BARBARA.
YOUR MOTHER IS AT WORK.
HHHRRRRRRR...
FIRSTLY, LET ME SAY--
FUCK!
SQUARRRRRRRK!

I'M NOT *HIM.*
I KNOW, CESTIS.
I STOLE HIS SHAPE TO KILL YOU. BUT NOW--
NOW YOU CAN'T GET OUT.
AND YOU CAN'T EVEN *HATE* ME, BECAUSE IT'S HIS MIND YOU'RE TRYING TO HATE ME WITH.
I THINK IT WILL STOP *HURTING* SOON.
WHEN THERE'S LESS OF *YOU,* AND MORE OF *HIM.*
OH PLEASE. PLEASE.
I'M WRITING BARBARA A *NOTE.* CAN YOU TELL HER IT'S HERE?
I-- I LOVE YOU, ELAINE.
I'M SORRY. I'M SO *SORRY* I HURT YOU.
IT DOESN'T *MATTER.*
IT PROBABLY WOULD'VE WORKED OUT THE *SAME* IN THE END.

SEVEN CDS, FIVE MARS BARS AND A PACK OF SUGAR-FREE GUM. THAT'S QUITE A HAUL.
OKAY, MISSIE. WHAT'S YOUR *NAME?*
KOOL
DIANE HORNBY.
PHONE NUMBER?
THERE'S NOBODY *HOME.*
THEN WHAT *SCHOOL* ARE YOU FROM? ROUNDHEY?
WE JUST MOVED HERE. I DON'T EVEN *HAVE* A SCHOOL YET.
IS THAT SO?
LISTEN, *"DIANE."* IT'S YOUR *FOLKS* OR YOUR *PRINCIPAL,* SO YOU CHOOSE.
THERE'S NO *WAY* YOU'RE WALTZING OUT OF HERE ON YOUR OWN.
FINE. TAKE YOUR *TIME.*
I'M NOT *GOING* ANYWHERE.

I NEED TO GO TO THE BATHROOM.
GOOD.
ANYTHING THAT'LL GIVE YOU A SENSE OF *URGENCY* IS FINE WITH ME.
I MEAN -- I'VE GOT THAT SUGAR THING. DIABETES. I NEED MY ASPIRIN.
INSULIN.
KEEP TALKING. THE TRUTH IS *OUT* THERE.
GIVE IT *UP*, KID.
I CAN GET TO THAT *DOOR* BEFORE YOU'RE HALFWAY OUT OF YOUR SEAT.

HEY!
WHAT'RE YOU--?
OH MY GOD!
OH MY SWEET *CHRIST!*
FINALLY!
MONA, WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR *BODY?*
DOESN'T MATTER.
DIDN'T EVEN *HURT* THIS TIME AROUND.

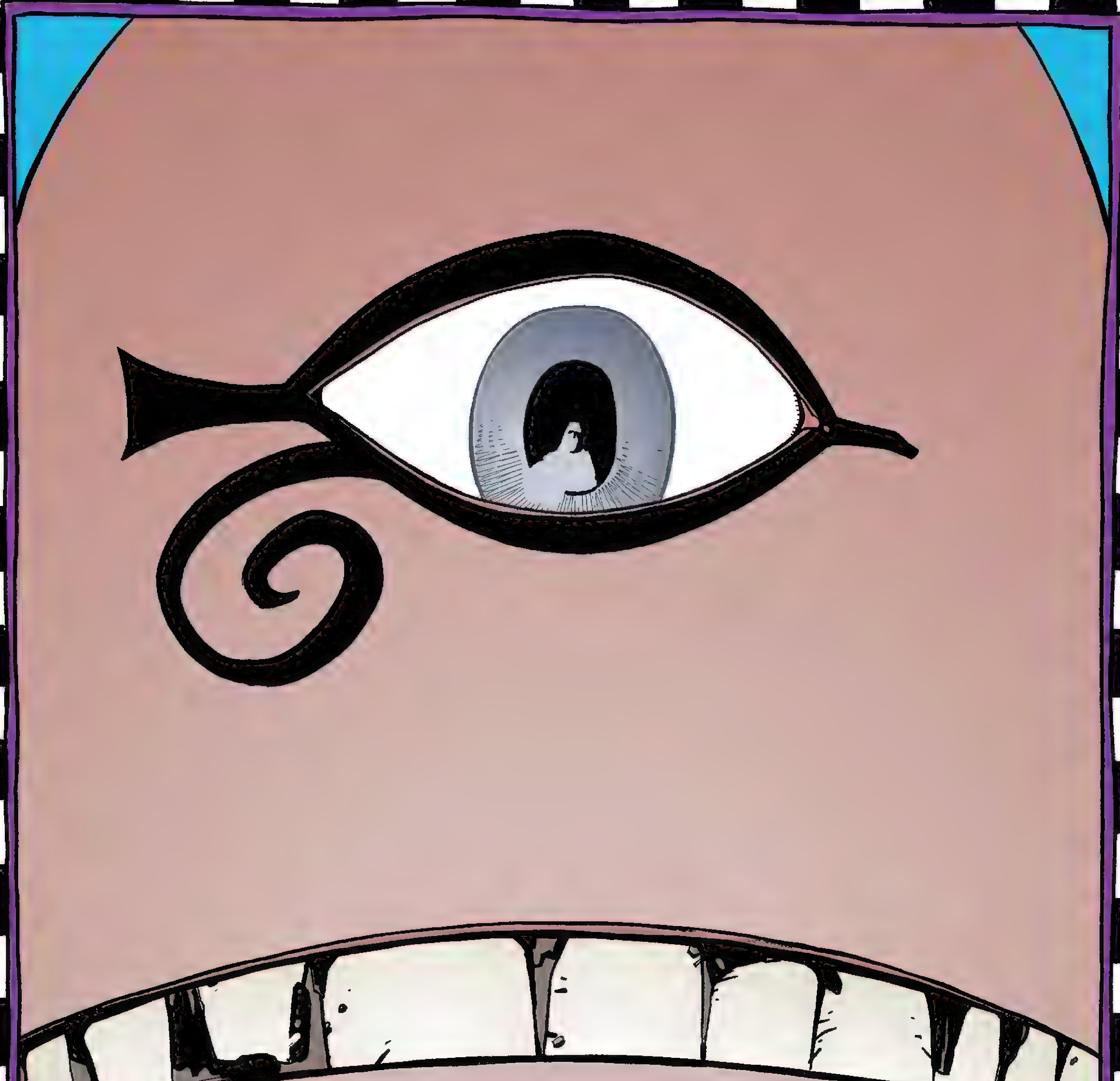
SO YOU'VE DECIDED?
YES.
IT'S NOT GOING TO WORK.
EITHER WAY.
SO MANY PEOPLE HAVE BEEN HURT. BARRY AND SARAH... MATT AND BARBARA... MISTER EASTERMAN...
IF I GO BACK HOME IT'LL JUST HAPPEN AGAIN. BUT I'VE GOT AN IDEA.
THERE WAS THIS ANGEL I MET IN HELL. HE TALKED WITHOUT SAYING ANYTHING.
DO YOU--?
YES. I KNOW HIM.
WELL HE'S GOT A JOB, HASN'T HE?
HE'S NOT JUST REAL QUIET, HE'S IN CHARGE OF QUIETNESS.

YOU WANT TO BE A *GUARDIAN* SPIRIT.
YOU DO?
WHAT WOULD YOU *GUARD?*
EVERYTHING.
I'VE TOLD THE PEOPLE OF THIS WORLD THAT THEY'RE *FORBIDDEN* TO WORSHIP.
I DON'T *WANT* TO BE WORSHIPPED.
I'D JUST SORT OF BE UP THERE *WATCHING.*
OH YEAH. AND *MONA* WOULD GET TO GUARD SOMETHING, TOO.
I WOULD?
HEY, THAT'D BE *COOL.*

WHAT D'YOU THINK YOU'D GO FOR?
GOD, I DON'T KNOW.
MAYBE POP MUSIC. OR CHOCOLATE.
I THOUGHT I WAS BEYOND BEING SURPRISED. BUT NO.
THAT'S THE MOST GROTESQUE AND RIDICULOUS SUGGESTION I'VE EVER HEARD.
AND YET PERHAPS --
-- THAT'S ONE OF ITS STRENGTHS.
IF YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE GODS, YOU MIGHT AS WELL HAVE FARCICAL GODS THAT COMMAND NO RESPECT...
...THAT BRING THE VERY CONCEPT INTO DISREPUTE.

OVER TO *YOU,* MONA.
WAIT, WAIT! I DIDN'T THINK!
UMM...
HOW ABOUT -- *HEDGEHOGS?* THEY'RE SMALL AND THEY GET RUN OVER A LOT.
SOMEONE SHOULD LOOK OUT FOR THEM.
VERY WELL. YOU ARE THE TUTELARY *SPIRITS* OF THIS WORLD.
THOUGH NONE WILL *NAME* OR *BLESS* YOU, EVEN IN THEIR THOUGHTS.
MONA DOYLE, *I* SET YOU OVER *HEDGEHOGS.*
ELAINE BELLOC, *I* SET YOU OVER EVERYTHING *EXCEPT* HEDGEHOGS.
KEEP THE *NOISE* DOWN TO A REASONABLE LEVEL. AND IN CASE YOU SHOULD BE TEMPTED TO LOOK OVER MY *SHOULDER* --
-- DON'T.

SO THEY WERE *BORN* TO US. THE SISTERS WHOSE MERCY *ENFOLDS* US FROM SUNRISE TO SUNRISE.
IF OTHERS *GRIEVED* FOR THEIR LOSS, WE DID NOT KNOW OF IT.
AND IF OTHERS KNEW THEIR *BOUNTY* BEFORE WE DID, WE DO NOT BEGRUDGE OR ENVY.
HEYA! I HAVE *TOLD* IT TO YOU, MY DEAR ONE, AS MY MOTHER TOLD IT TO ME.
KEEP IT *SILENT* IN YOUR HEART--
--UNTIL YOU TELL IT, *TOO*.



Deposition and Examination

ILLYRIEL: So the Mansions of the Silence are no more?

URIEL: Lucifer Morningstar destroyed them. He wished to retrieve the spirit of the child, Elaine Belloc – but the Mansions were too fragile to endure his footsteps. They crumbled, and a billion, billion souls were cast into the ultimate dark.

CASERA: That is monstrous.

THUMIEL: But it is in keeping with his earlier actions. Ever he has behaved without shame or conscience, and since he left Hell he is worse, not better.

ILLYRIEL: The place he built, in an Earthly city. Does it still stand?

URIEL: It is called Lux. And yes, it still stands. Or rather it stands again. When the demon Mazikeen and the human woman Beatrice Wechsler fought the Jin en Mok there, it was destroyed. But Lucifer rebuilt it as a cathedral without doors – a monument to his own arrogance and self-love. It is where he placed his gate, that is now a thousand gates. His gate that links all places in our creation to his own, and to each other.

DIMAS: Is it not intolerable that he flaunts his defiance of God in this way?

CASERA: It is… unfortunate. But God Himself expressed no opinion on the matter. Indeed He gave Lucifer the letter of passage that allowed the gate to be opened. And when Amenadiel led the Host in war against Lucifer, they were repulsed.

ILLYRIEL: By which you mean…?

CASERA: That if God's will had gone with them, they would surely have triumphed.

URIEL: It is debateable.

THUMIEL: No, it is beyond debate. If we could not know for sure what Yahweh willed when He was with us, then we will scarcely know it now, when He is gone from us, and from the worlds He made.

DIMAS: You are weeping, Thumiel. It little avails to weep.

THUMIEL: The throne is empty, and we are orphans. What shall avail us now?

(silence, which lengthens)

GREECE. THE PELOPONNESE.
KLEON, THIS IS *MADNESS.*
MADNESS!
PERHAPS IT WAS *WOLVES?*
A *HUNDRED* SHEEP IN ONE NIGHT? DON'T BE *ABSURD!*
LOOK -- THIS WAS DONE WITH A *CLUB.* OR THE BUTT OF A RIFLE.
NINETY-EIGHT SHEEP.
WHAT?
DID YOU *SPEAK* TO ME?
I SAID *NOTHING.*
IT WAS *I* WHO SPOKE.
I *SAID* THERE WERE ONLY NINETY-EIGHT SHEEP.
A HAPPY *CHANCE,* THEN--
--THAT THE TWO OF *YOU* CAME TO COUNT THEM.

KLUD
WAKE, GARAMAS. WAKE AND SPEAK TO ME.
I HAVE PREPARED YOUR BREAKFAST.
LITTLE BROTHER--
-- I DID NOT LOOK TO RISE SO EARLY.
BROTHERS IN ARMS

WHAT HAS HAPPENED, GYGES, THAT YOU RISK MY IRE IN THIS WAY?
YAHWEH. YAHWEH IS *GONE*, BROTHER.
YAHWEH?
CHOMP
WHICH ONE IS *HE?*
THE GOD OF THE *COVENANT*. THE GOD OF THE CREATION.
AH. AND HE IS DEAD?
THAT SEEMS UNLIKELY.
HE IS NOT *DEAD*. BUT HE HAS DEPARTED.
AND WITHOUT THE ORDER ESTABLISHED BY THE *GODS*, OUR OWN POSITION BECOMES DIFFICULT.
IT BECOMES *UNTENABLE*. BUT THERE ARE *OLDER* ORDERS.
LET US GRAFT OURSELVES ONTO ONE OF THEM.

ELSEWHERE. LOS ANGELES.
NUUUUUH!
NO! NO! NO!
BEATRICE.
JESUS, LOVER. DID YOU *COME* OR DID YOU SLIP A DISK?
I'M SORRY, I--
THIS WAS A BAD *IDEA.* I'M SORRY.
HEY, I'M NOT *OFFENDED.*
IN FACT, LET ME *GUESS.*
YOU'RE BASICALLY *STRAIGHT,* BUT YOU'VE GOT A CRUSH ON SOME WOMAN YOU KNOW --
--AND YOU THOUGHT SLEEPING WITH A *CALL GIRL* WOULD GET IT OUT OF YOUR SYSTEM. AM I RIGHT?
LOOK, I DON'T *MIND,* DARLIN'. I GET LOTS LIKE THAT.
AND A DOLLAR IS A *DOLLAR,* Y'KNOW?

STUPID. STUPID AND *PATHETIC.*
I WOULDN'T HAVE DONE THIS IF I WAS *THINKING* STRAIGHT.
I MEAN, GOD, IT'S BEEN TWO YEARS SINCE I EVEN *SAW* HER. SINCE LUX *REOPENED* AS A CATHEDRAL.
EXCUSE ME. SORRY.
WHATEVER MAZ IS DOING, IT'S A SAFE BET SHE'S NOT THINKING ABOUT *ME.*
AND NOW -- NOW *WHAT?* VISIONS? HALLUCINATIONS?
TWO *MONSTERS* IN A FIELD, EATING DEAD SHEEP.
THERE'S SOMETHING WRONG WITH MY *MIND.*
I'VE GOT TO *SEE* SOMEONE. STRAIGHTEN MYSELF--
...
BLOOD.
NOW WHERE THE FUCK DID *THAT* COME FROM?

LUCIFER'S COSMOS.
EDOM PLAIN.
LET US THROUGH, RABBLE. OUR BUSINESS IS NOT WITH SUCH AS *YOU*.
SO YOU'VE ALLIED WITH THE *LILIM*, MORNINGSTAR.
YOUR *STOMACH* IS EVIDENTLY MORE ROBUST THAN YOUR *INTELLECT*.
DO GOOD INTENTIONS EXCUSE BAD *MANNERS*, ZONAQUEL?
LET'S SAY THAT THEY *DO*, AND THAT MAZIKEEN'S SWORD STAYS IN ITS SHEATH -- FOR THE *MOMENT*.
STILL--
--THAT DOESN'T MEAN I *CARE* IF HEAVEN FALLS.

THE DREAMING.
BE QUICK, GARAMAS.
THEY ARE HARD TO HOLD.
LET US IN, DREAM.
IF WE HAVE TO FORCE YOUR HOSPITALITY, IT WILL BE THE WORSE FOR YOU.
AHRRR!
MY LORD SHAPER IS NOT AT HOME.
OTHERWISE YOU WOULD NEVER HAVE LIVED TO REACH HIS DOOR.
WHO'S DOWN THERE?
WHAT'S ALL THAT RACKET?
I AM DUPLICITY, OF THE ENDLESS. THIS IS MY BROTHER, DECEIT.
YOU MUST LET US IN. WE COME ON FAMILY BUSINESS.

DUPLICITY AND DECEIT ARE THE SAME *THING.*
AND YOU'RE THE *TITAN* BROTHERS, GYGES AND GARAMAS.
IS THERE SOME KIND OF *RIOT* GOING ON, LOOSH?
'COS NO ONE INVITED *ME.*
IT'S ALL UNDER CONTROL, MERVYN.
SOME IMPOSTORS WERE TRYING TO GAIN ENTRY.
BUT LORD MORPHEUS LEFT THE CASTLE WITH INSTRUCTIONS TO DEFEND ITSELF--
"--SO I IMAGINE THEY'LL WANT TO BE ON THEIR *WAY.*"
WHAT ABOUT THE *THRESHOLD,* BROTHER? DESIRE'S DOOR IS USUALLY--
NO.
I HAVE A MIND TO TRY SOMETHING A LITTLE MORE *AMBITIOUS.*
IF THE ABSENCE OF *YAHWEH* IS THE ROOT OF OUR PROBLEM--
--THEN WHY NOT *BECOME* HIM?

Fiat *LUX*.
THAT'S A *BLASPHEMY*.
POSSIBLY. IT'S HARD TO BE *SURE* THESE DAYS,
WHERE'S *MICHAEL?* STILL SULKING?
I *TOLD* YOU, URIEL. THIS IS FUTILE.
MICHAEL HAS *WITHDRAWN* FROM US.
HE SITS AT THE FOOT OF THE *PRIMUM MOBILE* AND WILL SPEAK TO NO ONE.
THAT IS WHY WE *CAME*, MORNINGSTAR. WE WONDERED IF THE HOLY NAME GAVE YOU ANY *REASONS* FOR HIS LEAVING.
OR ANY *INDICATION* AS TO WHEN--
HE'S BURNED HIS BRIDGES *BEHIND* HIM.
CLOSED THE CIRCLE OF ETERNITY-- FOM THE *OUTSIDE*.

AS TO THE REASON, IT WAS ALWAYS HIS *PLAN* TO LEAVE--
--ONCE HE HAD CHOSEN A *SUCCESSOR*.
AND THAT WOULD BE *YOU?*
THAT WOULD BE *BOTH* OF US. MYSELF AND MY NOBLE BROTHER.
YOU SEE, EACH OF US SUPPLIES SOMETHING THAT THE OTHER *LACKS*.
THAT'S *ABSURD*.
IT'S ALSO IRRELEVANT. NEITHER OF US *WANTS* THE JOB.
BUT *OTHERS* WILL.
YAHWEH IS -- WAS -- THE *DETERMINANT* OF THIS REALITY. THIS CREATION.
NOW THAT HE'S *GONE*, EVERY GOD, DEMON AND TOOTH FAIRY WILL WANT TO STEP INTO HIS SHOES.
UNLESS YOU *PREEMPT* THEM.

HOW DO WE BECOME *YAHWEH*, GARAMAS?
WE USURP THE *SPACE* THAT HE HAS LEFT EMPTY.
I SEE NO GREAT *DIFFICULTY* IN THIS.
TO BEGIN WITH, WE TRACE THE *EDGES* OF THAT SPACE.
WE DETERMINE ITS SIZE, ITS CONTOURS. THE POINTS AT WHICH IT *TOUCHES* THAT WHICH IT IS NOT.
FOR EXAMPLE, TO BE A *GOD* REQUIRES A BELIEF IN THE VALUE OF REWARD AND PUNISHMENT.
OBSERVE.
OB'S
TIONAL
BER
ROBERTS SHOES
YOU. YOU HAVE *OBEYED* THE SIGN.
YOU WILL ENJOY *LONG LIFE* AND PLENTY, AND YOU WILL BEAR A HUNDRED CHILDREN.
BUT THE REST OF YOU -- YOU HAVE *STOLEN* AND FORNICATED.
AND IN YOUR *HEARTS* YOU HAVE WISHED FOR YOUR FRIENDS TO FAIL.

YOU ARE *LOATHSOME* IN OUR SIGHT.
THAT WAS EASY ENOUGH.
THAT WAS ONLY A *BEGINNING.*
OH, JESUS.
THERE IS A *SEQUEL.*
WHICH COMES *BEFORE.*

SALLY'S BOWLS
BEATRICE. WHAT THE *HELL,* GIRL?
YOU'RE TWELVE MINUTES *LATE.*
I'M SORRY, LEANNE. I STARTED TO LEAK ON THE FREEWAY.
HAD TO GO BACK HOME AND *CHANGE,* YOU KNOW?
WHAT, YOU DON'T PACK A SPARE TOWEL IN YOUR *PURSE?*
WELL STAN ISN'T IN YET *EITHER,* SO I'LL PUT YOU DOWN AS SIX O'CLOCK.
THANKS, LEE.
HEY, EVERY TIME'S A *CELEBRATION,* RIGHT? MEANS YOU'RE NOT PREGNANT.
DON'T FEEL A *LOT* LIKE CELEBRATING.
STIGMATA? NOSE BLEED?
OR THAT *PROSTITUTE* COULD'VE MAYBE--
HEY, CAN I GET SOME *DRINKS* ON LANE EIGHT?
UH... SURE.
LET ME TAKE YOUR *ORDER.*

OOH, IT'S ALL IN THE *WRIST* ACTION.
I'LL SHOW *YOU* SOME WRIST ACTION, SHITBIRD.
SALLY'S BOW
4
5
6
SATURDAY BOWLING
KA-LANG
LEAGUE
WHAT THE F-- ?
HAPPY HOUR
SALLY'S B
OULFF!
AAAAA!

WHUMF
THIS ONE?
YES. AN OLD IMAGE, BUT CLEAR.
NOW!
THE ANGLE IS A LITTLE STEEP, THOUGH.
FROM OVER HERE, THEN?
DO IT NOW!
CRASH
YES, THERE WOULD BE BETTER.
L... LEANNE?
STANLEY?
OH MY GOD.
BOWL
SALLY'S BOW
SALLY'S BO

WE HAVE COME A *LONG* WAY.
FIVE THOUSAND *YEARS*. PERHAPS A LITTLE MORE.
THESE ARE ONE OF THE PEOPLES THAT WILL *WORSHIP* HIM.
AND THERE, ON THE HORIZON, ARE THEIR *ENEMIES*. PURSUING THEM.
MIRACLES ARE THE VERY *COINING* OF BELIEF.
LIKE GOLD, THAT KEEPS ITS PRICE NO MATTER *WHOSE* FACE IT BEARS.
BUT THESE WILL BE THOUGHT OF AS DEEDS PERFORMED BY *HIM*.
AND THUS WE PLANT OUR OWN *SEEDS* IN THE GARDEN HE HAS MADE.
NOW WE WILL GIVE THEM A PLURAL NAME - *ELOHIM* - FOR THEIR SINGLE GOD.
SO *QUICK*, BROTHER. SO QUICK AND SO SLY.
THE QUICKER THE *BETTER*.
ONCE *THIS* IS DONE, I CAN GO BACK TO SLEEP.

OPEN BOWL 24 HOUR
GRILL HELP WANTED
ATM INSIDE
LANE
"HOW MANY VOICES?" THE POLICE GUY WANTS TO KNOW.
SO I LIE.
POLICE LINE • DO NOT CROSS •
NATURALLY I LIE.
BECAUSE THE TRUTH IS TOO FUCKING SCARY TO LOOK AT RIGHT NOW.
TWO. YEAH, JUST -- JUST TWO.
AND YOU DIDN'T SEE ANYONE?
THE WHOLE PLACE WAS COMING APART. PEOPLE WERE -- WERE JUST FLYING THROUGH THE AIR.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT I SAW.
I MEAN, WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO SAY?
THAT THERE WAS A THIRD VOICE?
WELL, LOOK. THEY'RE GONNA TAKE YOU TO THE HOSPITAL NOW - GET THOSE CUTS LOOKED AT.
WE'LL TALK SOME MORE LATER ON.
BECAUSE THERE WAS, RIGHT AT THE END THERE.
COMING FROM BEHIND ME. SAYING "DO IT NOW."
BUT I REALLY DON'T WANT TO GET INTO THAT.
BECAUSE THE THIRD VOICE WAS MINE.

"PREACHING TO THE *HOST*..."
"*THAT* WAS A NOVEL EXPERIENCE."
YOU THINK THE OTHER POWERS ARE *MOBILIZING?*
THEY'D BE INSANE *NOT* TO. THEY'LL NEVER HAVE A BETTER CHANCE TO TAKE CONTROL.
THE ONLY QUESTION IS WHO'LL BE *FIRST* TO--
THAT LEAVES US WITH NO QUESTIONS AT *ALL*, THEN.
AH.
GYGES AND GARAMAS. THE CHILDREN OF CHAOS.
I'D HAVE EXPECTED THE *COMIC* INTERLUDE TO COME FURTHER DOWN THE BILL.

I DIDN'T *INVITE* YOU HERE, SO--
--IS THERE ANYTHING YOU WANTED TO *SAY* BEFORE SENTENCE IS PASSED?
YES, MORNINGSTAR. THERE *IS*.
WE ARE BORROWING YOUR *GATEWAY*.
WE HAVE NEED OF IT.
I'M SURE THERE ARE NUANCES I'M *MISSING* HERE. BUT TO BE HONEST--
--I DON'T REALLY *CARE*.

WHEN *YAHWEH* WAS LORD OF ALL, THEN YOUR FIRES WERE TO BE FEARED.
AYE.
BUT NOW *WE* ARE LORDS OF ALL.
WE HAVE STEPPED INTO YOUR FATHER'S *SPACE,* MORNINGSTAR. AND YOUR FATHER IS THE LIGHT YOU *SHINE* BY.
SO YOU HAVE NO *POWER* AGAINST US.
THERE IS NOTHING FURTHER TO *DETAIN* US HERE, BROTHER. THE GATE IS OPEN.
LET US TAKE OUR *PLACE* IN HEAVEN.

LUX.
FAREWELL, MORNINGSTAR. YOU MUST COME AND *WORSHIP* US SOON.
IF YOU ARE SUITABLY *HUMBLE*, WE WILL RECEIVE YOU GRACIOUSLY.
MAZIKEEN.
NO.
STAY HERE. GUARD THE *GATE* UNTIL I RETURN.
AND IF YOU *DON'T?*
THEN TAKE THE LILIM TO THE SILVER CITY, AND *HOLD* IT FOR AS LONG AS YOU CAN.
IF I DON'T JOIN YOU THERE, YOU CAN *MOURN* ME AT YOUR LEISURE.

ANGELS OF THE *HOST*, BEHOLD --
-- THE NEW *FACES* OF YAHWEH!
BROTHER? THIS IS *NOT* THE SILVER CITY.
THAT IS *OBVIOUS.*
THIS IS EFFRUL, IN THE HINTERLAND BEHIND HELL.
THE MORNINGSTAR HAS *TRICKED* US.
HOW? WE HAVE TAKEN HIS FATHER'S *PLACE!*
HIS FLAMES CANNOT *BURN* US! HIS POWER CANNOT *WORK* ON US!
BUT MY *WILL* IS STILL MY OWN.

DO YOU THINK WE *NEED* YOUR GATES TO RISE TO HEAVEN, LIGHTBRINGER?
NO. I'M SURE YOU *DON'T*.
BUT FROM THE BORDERS OF HELL, IT'S A *LONG* WALK.
DID YOU KNOW *EFFRUL*? I LEFT HIS BONES HERE AFTER I KILLED HIM.
AND THE LOCAL GENTRY TURNED HIS SKULL INTO A *BOUNDARY MARKER*.
WHAT I *KILLED*, I CAN BRING BACK.
THAT'S *ALSO* A MATTER OF WILL.
AAAURRGHHH!!!

VERMINOUS ANGEL! HAVE YOU NOT *REALIZED* YET THAT WE ARE GOD?
yes.
I have.
But you *haven't*, not fully.
power like that takes *time* to bed in.
SPLAT
"The *interim* is mine."

NOTHING. NO CONCUSSION, CERTAINLY. NO *WOUNDS,* EITHER.
THE BLOOD CHECKS OUT AS YOURS, BUT I'M DAMNED IF I KNOW WHERE IT *CAME* FROM.
SHE SOUNDS *DISAPPOINTED.* I SAY THANKS ANYWAY.
THEN -- BECAUSE I'VE GOT NOTHING TO *LOSE* -- I GO FOR BROKE.
IS THERE A *BACK* WAY OUT OF HERE?
MS. WECHSLER, YOU'RE A *WITNESS* TO A MULTIPLE HOMICIDE--
--AND THE LAPD WILL WANT *MY* BLOOD IF YOU WALK OUT OF HERE WITHOUT TALKING TO THEM FIRST.
I DIDN'T *SEE* ANYTHING.
ON THE *OTHER* HAND, THEY DON'T *PAY* ME TO BE A SECURITY GUARD.
IF YOU TAKE THE WRONG DOOR OUT OF THE *CAN,* THERE'S NO TELLING *WHERE* YOU'LL END UP.
I FEEL SO WEIRD. LIKE ALL OF THIS ALREADY *HAPPENED* TO ME ONCE.
LIKE I'M RUNNING, AND I'M HIDING, AND I ALREADY *KNOW* HOW IT TURNS OUT.

IT TURNS OUT *BADLY.*
GOT A *PHOBIC* TYPE DOWN IN PRE-OP, AMINA.
CAN YOU HOLD HIS *HAND* FOR ME?
IN A MINUTE. LET ME DEAL WITH THIS *MEDICARE* STUFF.
IT MUST RETURN ALONG THE *SAME* PATH.
WHAT?
HER *BLOOD* IS THE GUIDE. YOU UNDERSTAND?
HELLO? WHO'S *THERE?*
YES. *BLOOD.* I UNDERSTAND.
DO IT. DO IT *NOW.*
UUUUUF!
PFOOM

THE SILVER CITY.
THE TEMPTATION TO *USE* THOSE SPEARS WILL BE VERY STRONG.
FOR YOUR OWN SAKE, *RESIST* IT --
-- AND TELL *MICHAEL* I'M HERE TO SEE HIM.
L... LUCIFER, UNDER GOD'S *INTERDICTION* YOU CANNOT SET FOOT HERE.
ALL THE SAME, HERE I *AM*.
DO YOU REALLY *NEED* TO PURSUE THESE FORMALITIES TO THE POINT WHERE I KILL YOU?
ISN'T THERE *ONE* OF YOU WHO KNOWS HOW TO THINK?
SERAPHS.
STAND *DOWN*.

URIEL.
LUCIFER MORNINGSTAR.
IS THIS *PROVOCATION* OR AN OVERTURE OF PEACE?
IT'S NEITHER. I NEED TO SPEAK WITH MY *BROTHER.* I COULD EXPLAIN --
-- BUT BY THE TIME I'M *FINISHED* THE SILVER CITY WILL BE A PALE GREY SLAGHEAP.
THEN... PASS.
BUT AS I *TOLD* YOU, MICHAEL SPEAKS TO NO ONE.
HE'LL SPEAK TO *ME.*

FIVE...
BILLION...
YEAAAAAAARG!!!
KILL LUCIFER! *EAT* LUCIFER! *SHIT* LUCIFER!
NUUUUUUH!
TAKE HEART, BROTHER. NOW THAT WE -- ARE GOD --
-- DEATH CAN HAVE NO -- *HOLD* ON US.
GAAAAAAAAAH!

WHAT HAVE YOU *DONE* TO HIM, BROTHER GARAMAS?
I HAVE TURNED HIS *BLOOD* TO MOLTEN LEAD.
GROW YOURSELF SOME FLESH -- YOU LOOK *GROTESQUE.*
SEE. WITH A THOUGHT I AM *WHOLE* AGAIN.
LET US GO ON TO *HEAVEN,* AND BE ENTHRONED.
A *MOMENT,* GYGES. IT BEHOOVES US TO BE CAREFUL.
CAREFUL? ARE WE NOT *GOD?*
AYE, WE ARE GOD, BUT STILL --
THE MORNINGSTAR IS MOST *SLY.* WE ARE STRONGER, BUT STRENGTH HAS NOT *AVAILED* AGAINST HIM IN THE PAST.
WE MAY NEED SOME *OTHER* WEAPON.
A *CLUB?*
NO, NOT A CLUB.
THEN WHAT?
GIVE ME *SILENCE.*
WHILE I *THINK.*

I CAME HERE TO BE ALONE, LUCIFER. WILL YOU RESPECT MY WISHES?
OR DO YOU PREFER TO BE CAST OUT OF HEAVEN ALL OVER AGAIN?
THE TITANS HAVE WALKED OUTSIDE OF TIME, AND USURPED OUR FATHER'S POWER.
NONETHELESS, THEY'RE COMING HERE NOW TO ASSERT THEIR RULE. I WASN'T ABLE TO STOP THEM.
THE TITANS ARE A JOKE IN POOR TASTE.
I CARE NOT. I SERVED OUR FATHER FAITHFULLY, AND MY REWARD WAS TO BE CHASTISED FOR NOT BEING YOU.
SO -- IF YOU ARE TO BE HIS SUCCESSOR, THIS PROBLEM IS YOURS.
YOU'RE VERY GENEROUS, BROTHER.
AM I?
I THOUGHT WE MIGHT ACTUALLY COME TO BLOWS OVER THIS.

BUT SINCE YOU'RE HAPPY TO ***WAIVE*** YOUR BIRTHRIGHT--
--AND SINCE NOBODY ***ELSE*** IS LIKELY TO PRESS A CLAIM AGAINST ME--
LUCIFER!
I DID NOT MEAN--
-- THEN WITHOUT UNDUE FORMALITY I TAKE MY ***PLACE*** IN PRIMUM MOBILE.
I AM ***SAMAEL,*** THE SON OF YAHWEH.
GOD OF ***THIS*** CREATION, AND OF THE ***OTHER.***

LOS ANGELES.
THE CAB DRIVER IS THE *PROTECTIVE* TYPE.
I MEAN, *CRAZY* PEOPLE HANG OUT HERE. YOU WANNA BE CAREFUL.
A CAB
THANKS. KEEP THE *CHANGE.*
AND GOD HELP ME, PROTECTION'S WHAT I'M *LOOKING* FOR.
PROTECTION, AND-- IF I'M HONEST-- SOMETHING *ELSE.*
CALIFORNIA
HER FUCKED UP FACE. HER SMELL OF SWEAT AND SPICED *WINE.*
HER ARMS, STRONGER THAN A *MAN'S* ARMS.
STRIKE TWO
PRAY THAT HE WILL COME AGAIN
MAZIKEEN. ARE YOU STILL *ALIVE?*
ARE YOU *IN* THERE?
OR DID HE BUILD THIS TO BE YOUR *TOMB?*

COME *OUT*, LITTLE ANGELS. YOU ARE GYGES' SERVANTS NOW.
COME OUT AND SING *HYMNS* TO ME.
BROTHER. I HAVE *CONSIDERED*.
RETURN TO ME, AND I WILL *EXPOUND* MY THOUGHTS.
I WILL BE BACK PRESENTLY. THINK OF SOME *RHYMES* FOR MY NAME.
I *WILL* HAVE MY HYMNS.
WHAT HAVE YOU *DECIDED*, BROTHER GARAMAS?
THIS: THAT WHEN CONFRONTING THE MORNINGSTAR FACE-TO-FACE, AS WE *INTEND* TO DO--
--IT IS BEST TO STAB HIM ALSO IN THE *BACK*.
WE WILL WEAVE A *DUINUM*.
A *DOUBLE* OF LUCIFER WHOSE TOUCH WILL NEGATE AND CONSUME HIM.

AN *EXCELLENT* PLAN!
BUT... FROM *WHAT* WILL WE WEAVE IT?
FROM *MEMORIES.*
THERE MUST BE MORTALS WHO HAVE BEEN TOUCHED BY THE LIGHTBRINGER, WHO HAVE SEEN HIM AND *SPOKEN* WITH HIM.
WE WILL *COMB* THEIR MINDS, AND TAKE FROM THEM WHAT WE NEED.
IT IS BUT *SLENDER* PICKINGS. GLIMPSES AND GUESSES.
HE HAS HELD HIMSELF *ALOOF.*
OR THEY HAVE *SHRUNK* FROM HIM, INSTINCTIVELY, SENSING WHAT HE IS.
BUT SEE -- *HERE* IS ONE.
A MORTAL WOMAN WHO HAS STOOD *NEXT* TO HIM, AND FLINCHED NOT.
LET US EXAMINE HER MORE *CLOSELY.*

THIS ONE?
YES. AN OLD IMAGE, BUT CLEAR.
THE ANGLE IS A LITTLE STEEP, THOUGH.
FROM OVER HERE, THEN?
YES. THERE WOULD BE BETTER.
BUT SOFT YOU NOW, BROTHER.
SHE HAS ENOUGH MEMORIES OF HIM, AND TO SPARE.
BUT WHY SIFT THROUGH THE MOMENTS OF HER PAST, ONE BY ONE--
--AND TAKE AN AGE ABOUT IT--
--WHEN THERE IS A BETTER AND A SIMPLER WAY?

BROTHER, THIS IS NOT WHAT I INTENDED.
AND I WILL NOT ALLOW IT.
IS THERE A PROBLEM, MICHAEL?
YOU SAID YOU DIDN'T CARE.
STILL, THIS -- DISPLAY OFFENDS ME.
AS YOU WISH IT TO.
ONCE BEFORE YOU ROUSED ME TO ANGER AS A MEANS OF MANIPULATING ME. BUT HAVE A CARE.
WHEN ONCE I START TO DESTROY, I MAY NOT STOP WITH YOU.
AH, AND NOW WE SEE IT. UNDER THE SHOW OF VIRTUE.
THE HURT PRIDE. THE SCREAM OF SELF. THE NURTURED GRIEVANCES.
YOUR SINS. NOT MINE.
BROTHER, IF YOU CAN FIND NO MIRROR IN MY FACE --
-- THEN WHERE IN ALL THE WORLDS WILL YOU SEE YOURSELF?

LUCIFER, YOU ARE INSANE.
I HAVE WARNED YOU IN THE CLEAREST TERMS.
I TAKE TO WARNINGS AS YOU DO TO THINKING FOR YOURSELF.
I ASSURE YOU. IN ALL THIS DEAD EXPANSE OF -- POINTLESS MATTER -- AND POINTLESS LIVES--
--THERE IS NOTHING -- NOTHING! - THAT I CARE ABOUT ENOUGH TO SPARE IT.
THEN WE'VE GOT NOTHING MORE TO SAY TO EACH OTHER--
--ASSUMING WE EVER DID. ONE FINAL THING, THOUGH...
THERE ARE THREE OF US WHO CAN CONTINUE YAHWEH'S LINE.
THREE OF US WHO CAN STILL POSE A THREAT TO THE TITANS.
USE IT AS A BLINDFOLD.
THEN YOU WON'T HAVE TO SEE WHAT THEY DO TO HER.

DO YOU *HAVE* HER?
NOT QUITE. THIS REQUIRES -- A LITTLE *CONCENTRATION.*
AND I AM, AS USUAL, *PLAGUED* BY DISTRACTIONS.
THERE! I HAVE *HOLD* OF HER.
IN THE *PRESENT* MOMENT, WHERE WE MAY LAY OUT ALL HER THOUGHTS MOST EASILY AND *EXAMINE* THEM.
WILL SHE *SUFFICE?*
HER THOUGHTS ARE *CONFUSED.* DISORDERED. BUT SOME IMAGES STAND *OUT.*
NOOOOO!

IMAGES OF THE *MORNINGSTAR*. IN MANY MOODS. IN MANY MOMENTS.
ALL THAT WE *NEED*.
DO YOU KNOW WHAT YOU *ARE*, LITTLE DUINUM?
YES.
DO YOU KNOW WHAT YOU ARE *FOR?*
YES.
THEN GO. FIND HIM WHO IS YOUR *REFLECTION*, AND TOUCH HIM.
BE ONE WITH HIM, AND *CONSUME* HIM.
I WILL.
AND FOR OURSELVES, WE WILL FOLLOW AT A MORE *LEISURELY* GAIT.
THERE IS NO NEED TO HURRY, NOW.
AYE, BUT THERE *IS*, GARAMAS.
I WOULD NOT *MISS* THIS SIGHT.
NOT FOR *ANYTHING*.

CAN'T THINK. CAN'T SEE.
DON'T KNOW IF I'M *DEAD* OR JUST EMPTY.
SOMEONE'S *BREATHING*, SO THE WORLD'S STILL THERE.
SOMETHING'S *MOVING.*
SOMETHING'S MOVING ME.
M... MAZIKEEN? MAZ?
YOU... HOW? WHEN DID YOU --? WHERE ARE YOU *TAKING* ME?
TO HEAVEN.

SO, YOU'VE SPOKEN?
YES. WE'VE SPOKEN.
AND YOU'VE AGREED ON A *PLAN?*
I'M AFRAID *NOT.*
MY BROTHER FEELS A LITTLE *AMBIVALENT* ABOUT THE PROSPECT OF HEAVEN'S SURVIVAL. *AND* HIS OWN.
YOU'D BETTER TAKE ME TO THE *ARMORY.*
"WHATEVER'S COMING--
"--I WANT TO BE *READY* FOR IT."

IT'S FUNNY. I *FANTASIZED* ABOUT HER HOLDING MY HAND.
MAZ, DON'T! PLEASE DON'T!
ABOUT HER WALKING WITH ME.
I CAN'T -- I CAN'T *DEAL* WITH THIS.
I CAN'T BE HERE. IT'S JUST *WRONG*.
BUT IN THE DREAMS I GOT TO KEEP SOME FEELING IN MY WRIST.
OW!
AND WHEN SHE TURNED TO LOOK AT ME, IT WAS DIFFERENT.
THEY MEAN TO KILL HIM.
I WILL NOT ALLOW IT.
THE BUILDINGS ARE SINGING TO EACH OTHER.
ELEGIES. LAMENTS. FUNERAL HYMNS.
I CAN ALMOST MAKE OUT THE *WORDS*.
I ALMOST KNOW WHO THEY'RE *FOR*.

BROTHERS IN ARMS

Part Three of Three

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NOT A BAD FIT.
IS THERE A *SWORD* THAT GOES WITH THIS?
OF COURSE. *IBRIEL* DESIGNED BOTH SWORD AND ARMOR FOR YOU, IN THE DAYS OF THE FOUNDING.
BUT AS THINGS FELL *OUT*--
WHEN THE HOST FINALLY WENT TO WAR, I WAS ON THE WRONG SIDE.
THE IRONY WASN'T LOST ON ME.

LUCIFER -- WHY *ARE* YOU HERE? THE *DEFENSE* OF HEAVEN IS NO BUSINESS OF YOURS.
YOU'RE RIGHT. IT ISN'T.
I CAME HERE TO TALK TO MY BROTHER -- NO MORE THAN THAT. AND IT'S MYSELF I'M DEFENDING.
THE REST IS JUST A SIDE EFFECT.
STILL, THE HOST WILL ASSIST YOU -- IF I *EXPLAIN* TO THEM...
...YOUR INTERESTS AND OURS ARE *ONE* HERE.
NOT REALLY. MICHAEL WOULD HAVE MADE A DIFFERENCE. THE REST OF YOU WILL ONLY MAKE A *TARGET*.
WE ARE REQUIRED TO FIGHT FOR HEAVEN AND THE HOLY NAME. IT IS WHAT *DEFINES* US.
YOUR WILLINGNESS TO *GROVEL* IS WHAT DEFINES YOU.
YOUR SUBORDINATION OF YOURSELVES TO ANOTHER'S *WILL*.
THAT NOISE! THEY ARE *UPON* US!
I DON'T THINK SO.
OMNIPRESENCE WILL BE ONE OF THE HARDER TRICKS TO MASTER.

KILL HER! NEVER MIND *ME*, KILL HER!
YOU BAG OF WINGS AND WISHBONES.
I *TOLD* YOU I CAME UNDER TRUCE, AND YOU DREW ON ME.
WHAT TRUCE? YOU HEAR THAT YAHWEH IS GONE AND YOU GATHER LIKE KITES!
BUT THE CITY WILL *ENDURE!* IT WILL ENDURE FOREVER!
IT MIGHT.
YOU WON'T.
PUT UP YOUR WEAPONS, *ALL* OF YOU.
IF YOU HAVE *BUSINESS* HERE, DEMON, THEN STATE IT.
ZONAQUEL IS NOT *ALONE* IN FINDING YOUR PRESENCE HERE UNACCEPTABLE.
What is it, Mazikeen?
THEY HAVE FASHIONED A *DEATH* FOR YOU.
IT'S COMING HERE *NOW* --

" --ON STOLEN WINGS."
WE HAVE BEEN WALKING *FOREVER*, BROTHER.
WHY DO WE NOT *FLY*, AS OUR DUINUM DOES?
GYGES, THE DUINUM FLIES SO THAT IT WILL REACH LUCIFER *FIRST*.
WE WALK SO THAT WE WILL *NOT*. IS THAT SO HARD TO *GRASP*?
NO, BUT IT *IS* DEMEANING.
THE MEASURE OF OUR GREATNESS IS NOT TO BE TAKEN WITH LINE OR PLUMMET.
SEE THERE. THE SILVER CITY HANGS BEFORE US LIKE A FAIR *FRUIT*, ON A BRANCH THAT UNTIL NOW WAS ALWAYS TOO *HIGH* FOR US.
LET US PLUCK IT DOWN--
--AND *EAT* IT.

SO I'M IN HEAVEN. JUST IN THE LITERAL SENSE.
AND THAT'S MY OLD BOSS. AND THE WOMAN I USED TO WAIT TABLES WITH.
AND MY WRIST STILL HURTS WHERE SHE HELD ME SO THIS IS REAL.
SO THE MONSTERS ARE REAL AND THE BLOOD WAS REAL AND ALL I'M THINKING IS WHY IS SHE LOOKING AT HIM LIKE THAT?
I'M LOSING IT *I'M IN HEAVEN* DOES SHE LOVE HIM?
THEY USED HER ***MEMORIES*** OF ME? YOU'RE SURE?
I SAW IT. A DOUBLE OF YOU, WOVEN FROM BLACK THREADS.
THEY SAID IT WOULD ***CONSUME*** YOU WHEN YOU TOUCHED IT.
THEN YOU WILL ***NOT*** TOUCH IT. THE HOST WILL ***ENGAGE*** IT, WHILE YOU FIGHT THE TITANS.
THEY EXERCISED THEIR WILL AND THEIR POWER DIRECTLY ON HER.
THERE MIGHT BE ***ANOTHER*** WAY.
AND HE TURNS AND ***LOOKS*** AT ME. LOOKS ME STRAIGHT IN THE EYE.
BUT IT'S ***HER*** NAME HE SPEAKS.

DARK ANGEL, BY *GOD'S* DECREE I BID YOU PAUSE AND --
DOWN HERE, MOCKERY. I'M NOT HIDING FROM YOU.
IF YOU'RE *MY* DEATH, I'M YOURS.

BUT I EMBRACE THAT DEATH. IT IS MY PURPOSE.
IT IS MY **FULFILLMENT.**
YOUR FULFILLMENT? **SPARE** ME.
THIS ALREADY FEELS LIKE MASTURBATION.
I CANNOT BURN. MY ENDING IS PRE-ORDAINED.
WHEN WE BECOME ONE -- WHEN WE CANCEL EACH OTHER *OUT* -- I WILL FINALLY KNOW --
-- PEACE -- ?
CLEARLY, TITANS --
-- BEATRICE WECHSLER'S MEMORIES OF ME WERE **LESS** THAN PERFECT.

THIS IS WHAT IT ALL COMES *DOWN* TO, THEN.
THIS IS WHAT IT WAS ALL *ABOUT.*
SHE HOLDS ME TIGHT. *TOO* TIGHT.
LIKE SHE THINKS I MIGHT *RUN.*
LIKE SHE DOESN'T *UNDERSTAND*, OR IT DOESN'T MATTER.
BUT I *WOULDN'T.*
THAT'S THE *SICK* THING.
GNOTHE -- YOUR RISING. GNOTHE -- YOUR ROAD. GNOTHE -- YOUR RESTING.
I KNOW WHAT SHE'S GOING TO *DO* TO ME.
BUT IF I RAN --
-- I'D JUST END UP IN SOME PLACE THAT DOESN'T HAVE *HER* IN IT.

YOU ARE NOTHING TO US, MORNINGSTAR!
LESS THAN NOTHING!
I SEE. IS THAT WHY YOU TRIED TO KILL ME WITH A TOY--
--INSTEAD OF FACING ME YOURSELVES?
EARRGHHHHH!
YOU SEE, GYGES? MIGHT IS NOTHING WITHOUT WILL.
WE HAVE BOTH!
WE ARE YAHWEH!
WE HAVE ALL THE VIRTUES HE HAD!
REALLY?

MY APOLOGIES FOR DOUBTING YOU, THEN.
TCHOK
I'M SORRY! I'M SO SORRY! HE MOVED!
HE MOVED WHEN I TRIED TO HIT HIM!
GAAAAAAAAAH!

HE... CANNOT... MOVE...
...IF WE... DO NOT... ALLOW HIM TO.
CRASH
NOW I WILL FINISH HIM.
DO NOTHING.
IT IS ALREADY FINISHED.

"HER *BLOOD* IS THE GUIDE. IT MUST RETURN ALONG THE SAME PATH. YOU UNDERSTAND?"
"YES. *BLOOD* I UNDERSTAND."
MAZ. I WAS COMING TO *FIND* YOU.
THAT'S WHY I WAS *THERE* -- OUTSIDE LUX...
GNOTHE -- SWIM UPSTREAM TO WHERE YOU WERE *SPAWNED*.
...BECAUSE YOU TOLD ME ONCE -- I THOUGHT YOU SAID YOU *WANTED* ME.
AND TAKE *THIS* WITH YOU.
I *LOVE* YOU.
I'VE LOVED YOU EVER SINCE --
I *KNOW*.

I WANT TO STAY AND *WATCH.*
COME, BROTHER. THE *OUTCOME* OF THIS IS NOT IN DOUBT.
TO SEE THE MORNINGSTAR THRASH AND *SQUIRM* AS HE DIES.
THIS, MORE THAN ANYTHING, BRINGS *HOME* TO ME WHAT I NOW AM.
WHAT YOU ARE **NOW**, GYGES KOPROGENITOS--
--IS **DEAD.**

WAS THIS WHAT YOU INTENDED, BROTHER?
TO MOVE ME TO ANGER? TO ROUSE ME FROM MY LETHARGY?
WELL, I AM ROUSED.
GKKKKKK!
BUT NOT MUCH MOVED.

I... HOWEVER...
...AM BECOMING ...ANGRY.
THEN DO IT!
DO IT NOW.
IF THIS CITY WILL NOT ACKNOWLEDGE US --
-- THEN LET IT FALL!

NO! NO, WE MUST BE ONE!
WE MUST BE NOTHING!
EVENTUALLY, PERHAPS.
YOU GO ON AHEAD.
HOW-- HOW DID YOU ACCOMPLISH THIS, LUCIFER?
THEY WERE IMMUNE TO MY POWER.
THEY WERE IMMUNE TO ALL POWER -- EXCEPT THEIR OWN.
BUT THE VIRTUE OF THE TITANS WAS TO TRANSCEND TIME. I TURNED IT BACK ON THEM.
KILLED THEM BEFORE THEY BECAME OMNIPOTENT.
"THE WOMAN WHO THEY TOUCHED WAS THE CONDUIT."
"THE CHANNEL THROUGH WHICH I WAS ABLE TO TOUCH THEM BACK."

STOP.
YOU'RE STILL ALIVE. THE BLOW PASSED THROUGH YOU.
AAARHHHHH! AHUH! AHUH! AHUH!
IT IS OVER?
IT'S OVER.
THEN THERE IS NO LONGER A NEED FOR YOUR PRESENCE HERE.
BEATRICE. I NEED YOUR HELP IN ONE FINAL ACT.
OH GOD! OH GOD!
PASSION IS BLASPHEMY IN THIS HOLY PLACE.
AND I HAVE A GREAT NEED TO BLASPHEME.

A MOMENT'S THOUGHT WILL SHOW YOU THE *FOLLY* OF SUCH AN ACTION.
OR, SHOULD IT PROVE NECESSARY, *I WILL.*
OUR *THANKS* TO YOU, SONS OF YAHWEH.
THE CITY CRIED *OUT* TO YOU IN ITS DISTRESS, AND YOU *HEARD* ITS PLEAS.
WILL YOU TAKE THE *THRONE*, THEN?
NO. BUT NEITHER WILL **YOU**.
I WILL BE MORE **VIGILANT** IN THE FUTURE. YOU WILL NOT BE **NEEDED** AGAIN.
ARROGANCE, TOO. IS THIS CONVERGENCE OR CHIASMUS, MICHAEL?
WILL WE BECOME *TWINS*, OR PASS EACH OTHER GOING IN *OPPOSITE* DIRECTIONS?
EITHER WAY, I FIND YOUR *FAITH* -- AS I FIND MOST FAITH --
-- *GROTESQUELY* MISPLACED.

I WOKE UP FROM A *SCARY DREAM.*
I THOUGHT HOW DID THE *BED* GET TURNED AROUND?
I THOUGHT IF IT'S *NIGHT* THEN HOW COME IT'S SO HOT?
BUT THERE WAS *SUNLIGHT* ON MY HAND. RIBBON SUNLIGHT. A *SWORD* BLADE.
AND THIS *WASN'T* MY BED.
SO MANY SMELLS I DIDN'T *RECOGNIZE.* SO MANY SOUNDS.
SHOUTS. METAL CLANGING OFF METAL. LIKE A *WAR* GOING ON JUST OUTSIDE THE WINDOW.
BUT THEY *WEREN'T* FIGHTING. THEY WERE JUST TRAINING.
A THOUSAND *MONSTERS* GOING THROUGH THEIR PACES.
IN STRICT *OBEDIENCE* TO HER COMMANDS.
LIKE ME.
LIKE *ME.*

JOHN BAXTER SEWELL.
I MEAN, WHAT A *WASTE* OF DIVINELY GIFTED FREE *WILL*.
WELL, THE GOOD NEWS IS HE'S NOT *DEAD* YET.
BUT HOW LONG CAN IT BE? ALL FLESH IS *GRASS*, AS SOME POETIC SHITBAG OBSERVED.
ALL FLESH IS GRASS, AND SOMETIMES THE OTHER MAN'S GRASS IS *GREENER*.
WHICH IS WHAT BRINGS ME-- WHAT BRINGS US *ALL*--TO THIS SAD HEIGHT.
WELL, THAT AND GOOD *INTENTIONS*.
A PAVING SUBSTANCE ON WHICH I SHOULD HAVE KNOWN *BETTER* THAN TO SET MY FOOT.
I HAVE ONE MOMENT STILL TO SPARE. SO *INDULGE* ME. HEAR MY STORY.
I'LL LET YOU ADD YOUR *OWN* FUCKING MORAL.

Neutral Ground

Mike Carey-Writer
Ted Naifeh-Guest Artist
Ken Lopez-Lettering
Daniel Vozzo-Colors and Separations
Tara McPherson-Guest Cover Painter
Mariah Huehner-Assistant Editor
Shelly Bond-Editor
Based on characters created by
Gaiman, Kieth and Dringenberg

HE'S A CLERK IN A *LAW* FIRM.
LAW SCHOOL DROPOUT HIMSELF, SO HE'S PATRONIZED BY HIS BOSSES AND *DESPISED* BY HIS PEERS.
AND IF HIS TRAINING DOES OCCASIONALLY ALLOW HIM TO SPOT A *GLITCH*--
--AN *ANOMALY* THAT THE EYE OF THE UNINITIATED WOULD GLOSS OVER--
--WELL, IT'S NOT LIKE ANYONE'S EVER GOING TO *THANK* HIM.
MISTER FULBRIGHT?
THERE'S SOMETHING HERE THAT--WELL, IT ISN'T QUITE *RIGHT*.
YOU SEE, THIS IS A *FUNDS* TRANSFER FROM THE CLIENT ACCOUNT, BUT THERE'S NO CODE OR CASE NUMBER AGAINST IT.
EVERY TRANSFER HAS TO BE IN RESPECT OF A SPECIFIC *CASE*.
AND IT'S SUCH A LARGE SUM THAT--
JUST PROCESS THE GODDAMN *PAPERWORK*, SEWELL.
IF WE WANTED YOU TO *THINK*, WE'D BE PAYING YOU A LIVING *WAGE*.

AFTER HOURS HE'S GOT *ANOTHER* LIFE.
ANOTHER *HALF-LIFE*, RATHER--BECAUSE IT'S AS PRONE TO *DECAY* AS THE FIRST.
THE GENITAL WARTS
HE LIKES THE *FREEDOM* OF PUNK ROCK.
THE TORN SHIRTS. THE CURSE WORDS. THE PUBLIC *SPITTING*.
JOHN FUCKING RUSH MARRIED SONY FUCKING LAIR.
THE CHURCH WAS MADE OF CORPSES AND THE CAKE WAS PUBIC HAIR!
BUT EVEN *HERE* HE FAILS TO REALIZE--
--THAT *CONTEXT* IS EVERYTHING.
TAKE A HIIIIIIIIIKE!
YOU GUYS *SUCK!*
GET OFF THE FUCKING STAGE!

AND YOU CAN HAVE YOUR GODDAMN *AMP* BACK WHEN YOU'VE PAID FOR THE DAMAGE!
CHRIST, SEWELL! A FUCKIN' *GOTH* CLUB! DO YOU NEED STRONGER *MEDICATION?*
WELL *THE DAMNED* WERE SORT OF GOTHIC PUNK. THERE *IS* AN OVERLAP.
THAT'S *MY* FUCKING AMP IN THERE, JOHN!
DON'T EVEN BOTHER *CALLING* ME UNTIL YOU'VE GOT IT BACK.
DON'T *BE* LIKE THAT, PUCE. PLEASE...
PUCE!
STAY HERE, MAN. YOU'VE DONE *ENOUGH.*
I'LL GO TO HER.

HI, MRS. SILVERMAN.
GEWALT IST MIR! ES HAT EIN *TEUFEL* IN ES.
CLICK CLICK CLICK
DAMN.
IT'S OKAY. YOU DON'T *WANT* THE LIGHTS.
WHA--?
BELIEVE ME--
--IT'S BETTER IF YOU DON'T *SEE* US.

KA-THUD!
SLAM!
LORDS AND LADIES OF THE REALM *INFERNAL*--
--MIGHTY *KINGS* OF THE DEMONIC DIASPORA--
YOU HAVE ASKED, AND UNAGOR HAS *DELIVERED.* PLEASE--
--TAKE YOUR *PLACES,* AND BEGIN.

THIS IS A SOLEMN OCCASION, CONFRERES. WHEN SOME OF US TOOK UP RESIDENCE IN LUCIFER'S HELL, AND OTHERS REFUSED TO FOLLOW, WE PARTED COMPANY.
LET ME REMIND YOU WHAT IT IS THAT HAS BROUGHT US TOGETHER AGAIN AT THIS TABLE.
GOD IS GONE FROM THIS COSMOS.
AND HE'S NOT COMING BACK.
YOU PRESUME TOO MUCH, DERUKIM! WHAT WE KNOW IS THAT THE SILVER CITY WAS ATTACKED.
--WHICH YAHWEH MAY HAVE ALLOWED FOR REASONS OF HIS OWN.
LUCIFER HAS LAID WASTE THE MANSIONS OF THE SILENCE. WOULD YAHWEH HAVE ALLOWED THAT?
PERHAPS LUCIFER IS AT LAST STRONGER THAN HIS FATHER.

AYE, YOU HELL-KIN WOULD *LIKE* TO BELIEVE THAT, SINCE YOU *CHOSE* TO SERVE HIM.
BUT WHERE IS LUCIFER? HE COULD SETTLE THIS IN A MOMENT.
LUCIFER *WAS* INVITED TO THIS GATHERING--AND HE *MAY* YET ATTEND.
IN THE MEANTIME, LET US REVIEW OUR *OPTIONS*.
AND YADA YADA YADA. SWEAR TO *GOD*--OR THE SPACE WHERE HE USED TO BE--
--IT'D MAKE YOU VOMIT YOUR OWN *LUNGS* UP TO HEAR THESE GUYS BANGING THEIR DRUMS.
THIS IS AN IMPRESSIVE *VENUE*, UNAGOR. YOU CHOSE WELL.
UH... *THANKS*--
ETHOR. OF THE *LILIM*, RIGHT?
WELL, A HUMAN SOUL IS A NICE, *DISCREET* LITTLE PLACE. BUT I' D BETTER GO GET A READING ON HIS *VITAL* SIGNS.
WOULDN'T WANT HIM TO *CROAK* WHILE WE'RE STILL IN HERE. CATCH YOU LATER.

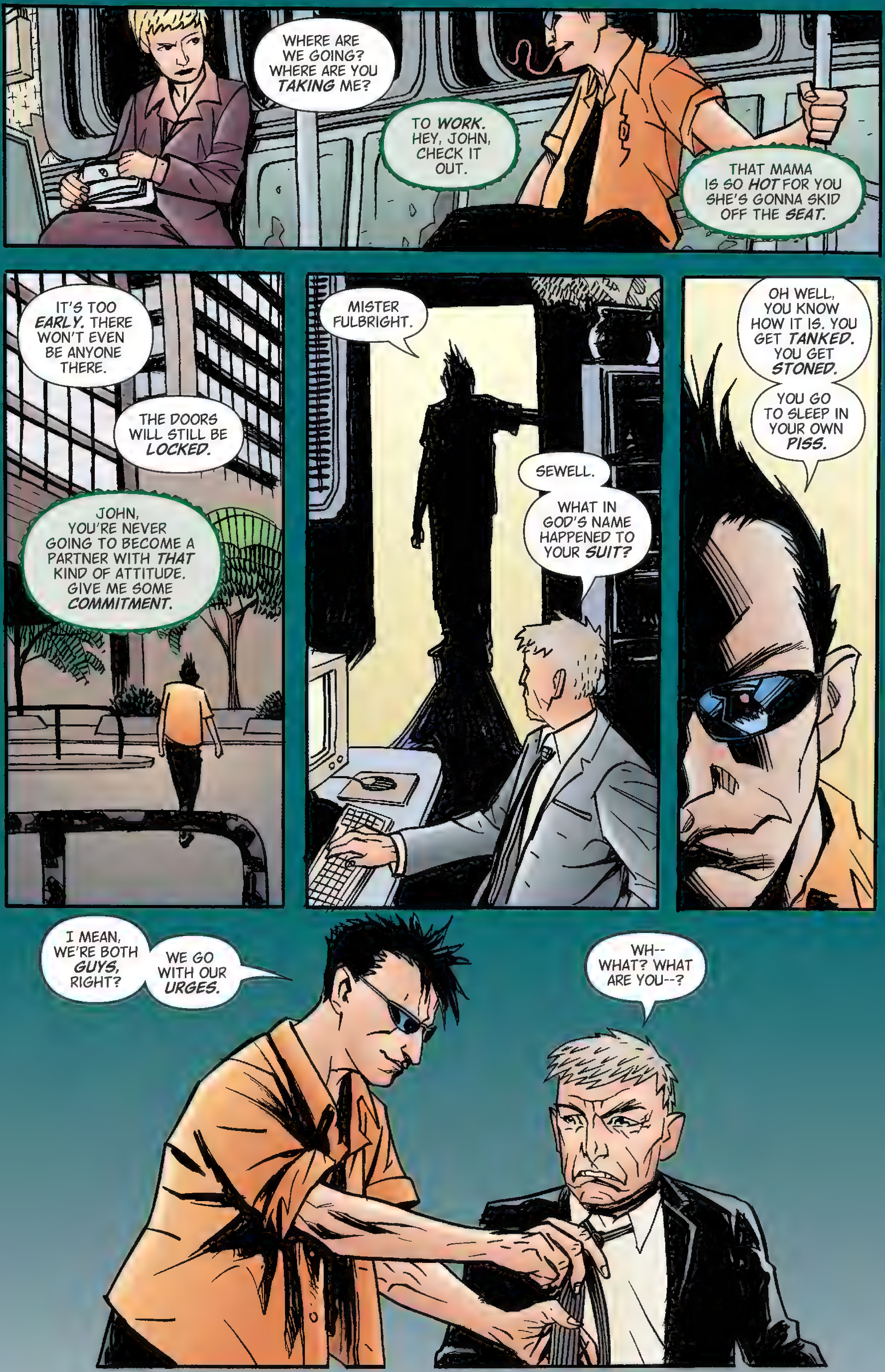
HEY, JOHN! HOW'S IT *HANGING?*
SORRY ABOUT THE *INCONVENIENCE.* NORMAL SERVICE WILL BE RESUMED IN A WHILE.
TRUTH TO TELL, PAL, YOU GOT THE *BEST* OF IT. AT LEAST YOU'RE JUST BORED.
IF I HAVE TO LISTEN TO MUCH *MORE* OF THAT SHIT, I'M GONNA GO--
SON OF A BITCH.
I JUST HAD THE MOST *AMAZING* IDEA.
WE'RE GONNA HAVE US SOME *FUN,* JOHN.
DON'T WORRY. I'LL *DRIVE.*

WE WENT TO A COUPLE OF BARS, FIRST. THEN TO A CLUB, WHERE WE SET UP *OPEN HOUSE* WITH JOHN-BOY'S CREDIT CARD.
GOD FORBID WE SHOULD LOOK *CHEAP.*
OF COURSE, HUMAN FEMALES ARE ABOUT AS INTERESTING TO ME AS *LINT.*
BUT I WAS RIDING JOHN'S NERVOUS SYSTEM, SO WHAT *HE* FELT, I GOT TOO. LOTS OF LAUGHS.
UNTIL HE STARTED IN WITH THE *WHINING.*
WHY ARE YOU *DOING* THIS TO ME?
IN THE NAME OF GOD, WHAT HAVE I DONE? WHAT WAS MY *SIN?*
YOU MEAN *BESIDES* BEING A LAWYER? YOU WERE JUST NEUTRAL *GROUND,* JOHN.
HEY, WOULDN'T *THOSE* KEEP YOUR EARS WARM IN WINTER?
BUT HE JUST WOULDN'T GET INTO THE *SPIRIT* OF IT.
SO WE HIT THE *ATM* AND WENT OFF IN SEARCH OF PASTURES NEW.

WE FOUND A *CARD GAME* IN THE BACK OF A BROTHEL WHERE WE SCOOPED SEVEN HUNDRED BUCKS AND ABOUT A HALF DOZEN SOULS.
BEST GAME I'VE HAD IN A THOUSAND *YEARS.*
AND WHO'D'VE THOUGHT YOU COULD EVEN *BUY* A *1972* ELECTRA GLIDE IN SAN FRAN AT MIDNIGHT?
LET ALONE *STEAL* ONE?
THE HUMAN BODY'S AN *AMAZING* THING, JOHN.
OH CHRIST! OH CHRIST!
BUT IT JUST *ROTS* IF YOU DON'T USE IT, YOU HEAR WHAT I'M SAYING?
DO NOT MOVE! REPEAT, DO NOT MOVE! WE'RE COMING TO GET YOU!
FUCK, BRING THAT *CHOPPER* IN! HE'S LOSING HIS BALANCE!
SORRY, JOHN. I'VE GOT TO GO CHECK ON THE *DELEGATES.*
THEIR COMFORT IS MY *REP.* I KNOW YOU UNDERSTAND.

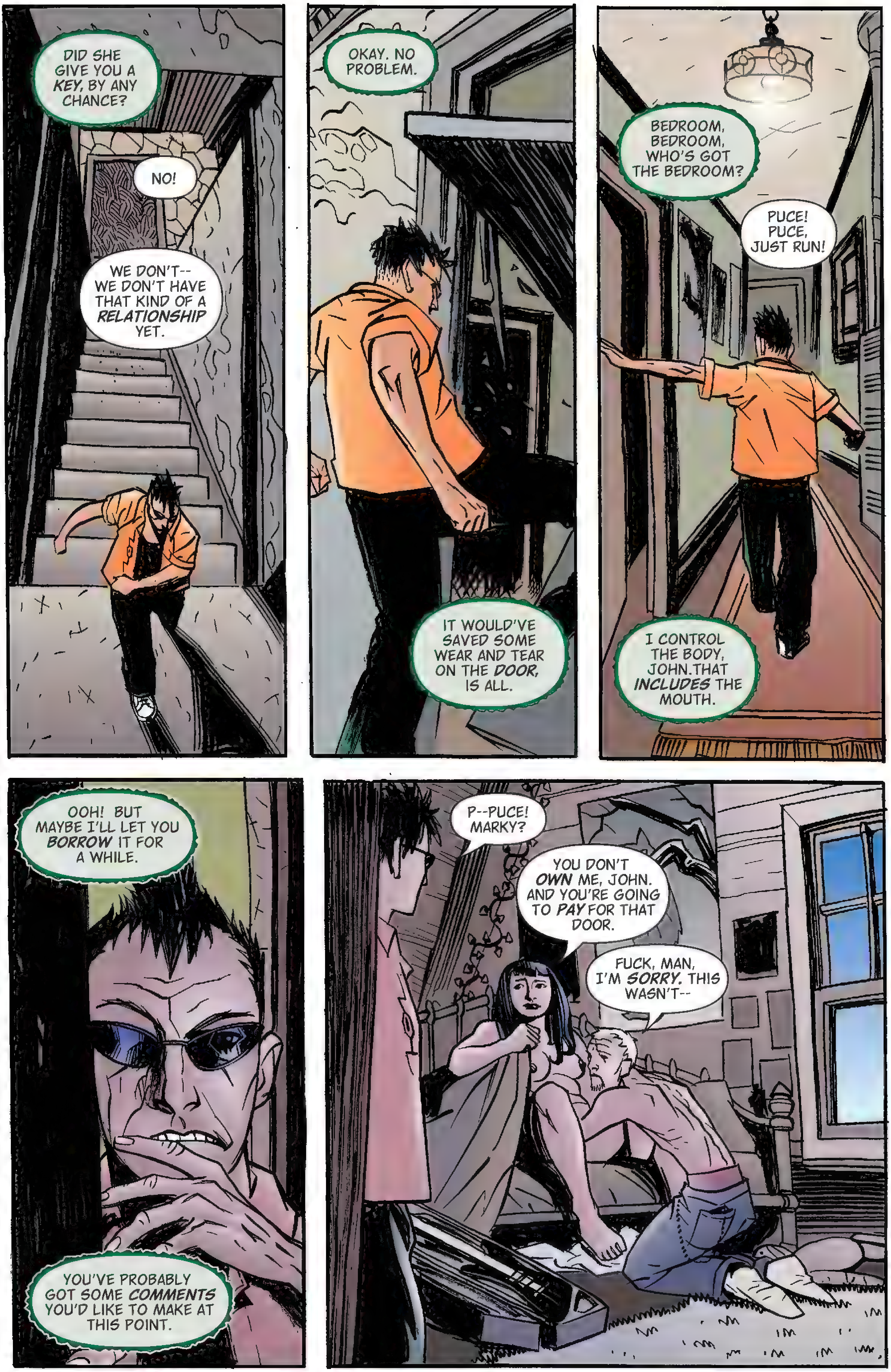
TO BE HONEST I NEEDN'T HAVE *WORRIED.* THEY'D ONLY JUST GOT UP TO INSULTING EACH OTHER'S MOTHERS.
WHICH WAS AGENDA ITEM *THREE.* TWO HUNDRED SEVENTY SIX TO GO.
HEY, CALL ME CYNICAL, BUT THIS IS JUST A *JOB* TO ME. I PROVIDE A SERVICE.
I DIDN'T SIGN UP BECAUSE I BELIEVE THE HELL-HOST AND THE DIASPORA CAN LEARN TO *LOVE* EACH OTHER.
AND I COULDN'T STOP THINKING ABOUT POOR JOHN.
SITTING IN A POLICE CELL SOMEWHERE WITH NOBODY EVEN TO POST *BAIL* FOR HIM.
FROM FAR AWAY, ACROSS THAT *MADDING* CROWD--
--I HEARD THE CALL OF *DUTY.*

HEY.
AAAAAAA!
DON'T BURST AN *ARTERY*, JOHN. IT'S JUST ME.
YOU'RE NOT *REAL!* YOU'RE NOT *REAL!*
OH JESUS, I'M GOING CRAZY! I'VE GOT TO GET *OUT* OF HERE!
YOUR WISH IS MY *COMMAND*.
RATCH
CLICK
LET'S GO.
NO! JESUS, NO! DON'T *DO* THIS!
DON'T DO THIS TO ME *AGAIN!*
IT'S NOT *TO* YOU, JOHN. IT'S *FOR* YOU.
YOU'RE IN A JAIL CELL, ALL BY YOURSELF AND NOBODY HAS SEEN YOU *LEAVE*.
I'D CALL THAT THE PERFECT *ALIBI*, WOULDN'T YOU?

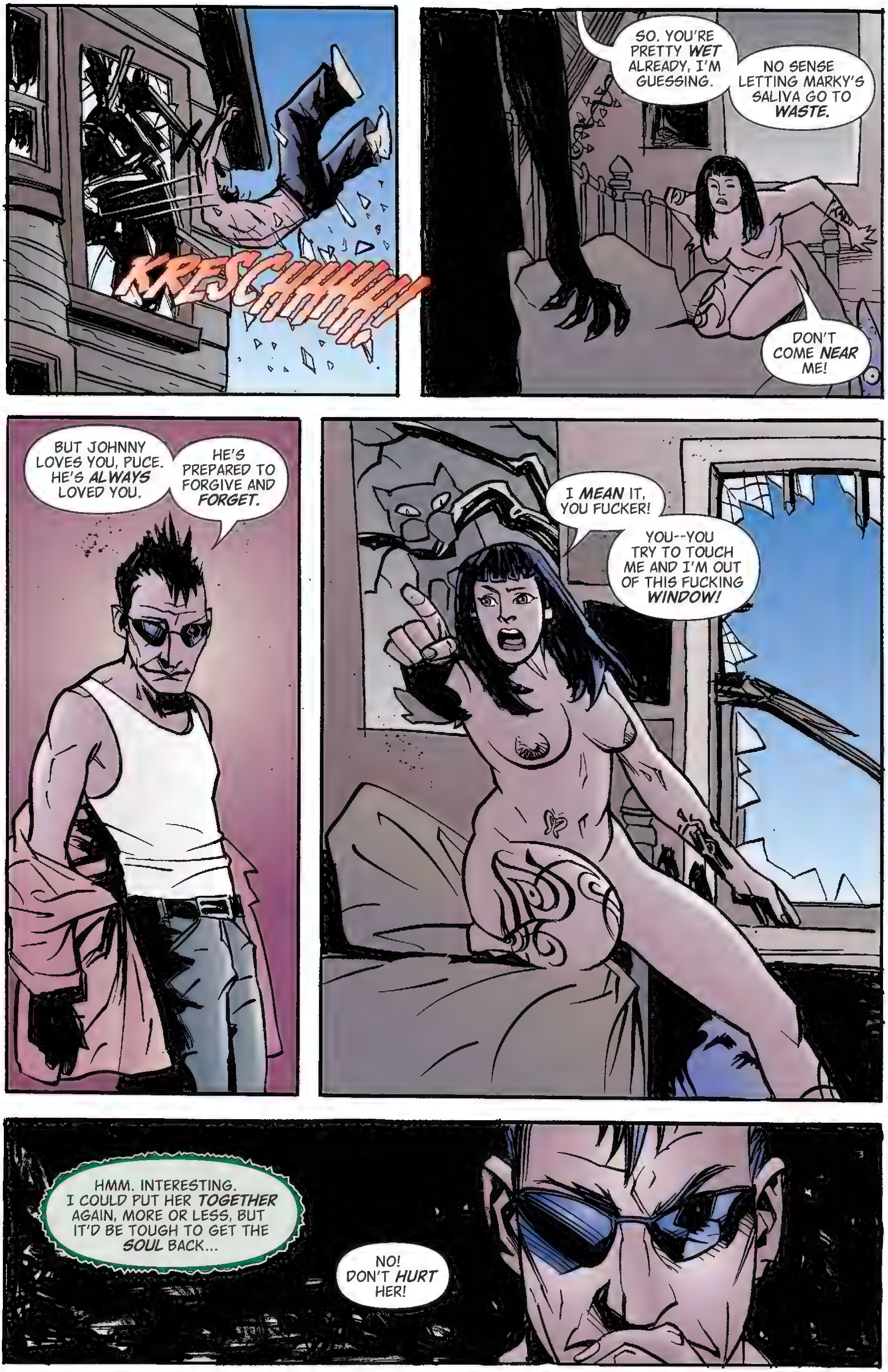

WHERE ARE WE GOING? WHERE ARE YOU *TAKING* ME?
TO *WORK.* HEY, JOHN, CHECK IT OUT.
THAT MAMA IS SO *HOT* FOR YOU SHE'S GONNA SKID OFF THE *SEAT.*
IT'S TOO *EARLY.* THERE WON'T EVEN BE ANYONE THERE.
THE DOORS WILL STILL BE *LOCKED.*
JOHN, YOU'RE NEVER GOING TO BECOME A PARTNER WITH *THAT* KIND OF ATTITUDE. GIVE ME SOME *COMMITMENT.*
MISTER FULBRIGHT.
SEWELL.
WHAT IN GOD'S NAME HAPPENED TO YOUR *SUIT?*
OH WELL, YOU KNOW HOW IT IS. YOU GET *TANKED.* YOU GET *STONED.*
YOU GO TO SLEEP IN YOUR OWN *PISS.*
I MEAN, WE'RE BOTH *GUYS,* RIGHT?
WE GO WITH OUR *URGES.*
WH-- WHAT? WHAT ARE YOU--?

AS KILLINGS GO, IT WAS *VANILLA* RATHER THAN SUPER FUDGE CHUNK.
THE ONLY *BUZZ* I GOT WAS FROM HAVING JOHN SCREAMING INSIDE HIS OWN HEAD THE WHOLE TIME. *BEGGING* ME TO STOP.
BUT I HAD TO SHUT HIM UP WHEN I GOT ON TO THE *TECHNICAL* STUFF.
SOME OF THE RECORDS I WAS MANIPULATING WERE THOUSANDS OF *MILES* AWAY. I NEEDED TO CONCENTRATE.
WHAT HAVE YOU DONE? OH GOD, WHAT HAVE YOU *DONE?*
I'VE MADE YOU *RICH*, YOU STRANGULATED LITTLE TURD.
WEREN'T YOU EVEN *WATCHING?*
ALL THAT *MONEY* FULBRIGHT WAS EMBEZZLING? WELL, IT'S ALL TUCKED UP NICELY IN YOUR BRAND-NEW OFFSHORE *ACCOUNT.*
HE TAKES THE RAP, *YOU* TAKE THE GRAVY TRAIN.
NOW--
--LET'S GO SORT OUT YOUR *OTHER* NEEDS.

PUCE? YOU MEAN PUCE? YOU--DON'T EVEN *THINK* ABOUT--
FUCK IT, JOHN! I'M NOT GOING TO *TOUCH* HER.
THAT'S *YOUR* PREROGATIVE.
LOOK, I'M GOING OUT OF MY *WAY* FOR YOU. FRANKLY, YOUR ATTITUDE AMAZES ME.
I THINK MAYBE WE NEED A LITTLE TRIAL *SEPARATION.*
DON'T TOUCH ANYTHING WHILE I'M GONE, OKAY?
HONK!
PARP!
BEEEEEEEEEEEE
THE DELEGATES HAD REACHED THE *BONDING* STAGE, WITH SURPRISINGLY FEW CASUALTIES.
THEY WERE TALKING ABOUT RUNNING THE *ANGELS* OUT OF HELL--ABOUT FUCKING *TIME,* IMO.
BUT I KNEW WHAT KIND OF *TROUBLE* JOHN WOULD GET INTO WITHOUT ME.
AND IT WOULDN'T BE *NEARLY* AS MUCH FUN AS THE TROUBLE I HAD IN MIND.

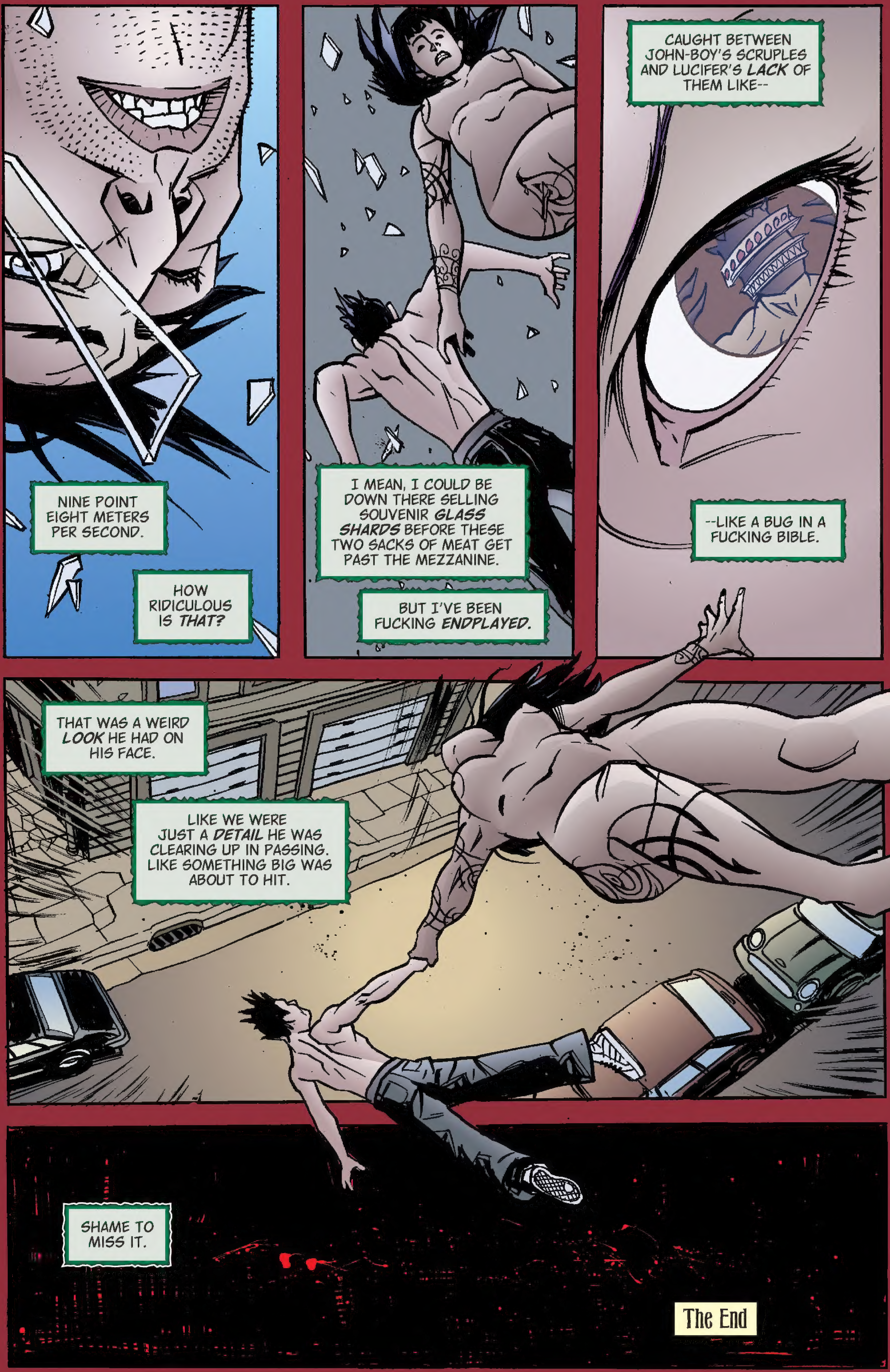

DID SHE GIVE YOU A *KEY*, BY ANY CHANCE?
NO!
WE DON'T-- WE DON'T HAVE THAT KIND OF A *RELATIONSHIP* YET.
OKAY. NO PROBLEM.
IT WOULD'VE SAVED SOME WEAR AND TEAR ON THE *DOOR*, IS ALL.
BEDROOM, BEDROOM, WHO'S GOT THE BEDROOM?
PUCE! PUCE, JUST RUN!
I CONTROL THE BODY, JOHN. THAT *INCLUDES* THE MOUTH.
OOH! BUT MAYBE I'LL LET YOU *BORROW* IT FOR A WHILE.
YOU'VE PROBABLY GOT SOME *COMMENTS* YOU'D LIKE TO MAKE AT THIS POINT.
P--PUCE! MARKY?
YOU DON'T *OWN* ME, JOHN. AND YOU'RE GOING TO *PAY* FOR THAT DOOR.
FUCK, MAN, I'M *SORRY*. THIS WASN'T--

TONGUE-TIED, JOHN-BOY? CAN'T SAY THE SAME FOR MARKY, CAN WE?
DON'T WORRY.
I'LL HANDLE THIS PART.
HEY, DON'T TOUCH MY AXE, MAN. THAT'S NOT COOL.
IT'S MY AREA OF EXPERTISE.
UKKKK!
YOU KNOW, THAT WAS PROBABLY THE BEST CHORD YOU EVER GOT OUT OF THAT FRIGGING THING.
YOU OUGHT TO BE THANKING ME.
THERE'S NOTHING SHARPER THAN INGRATITUDE, MARKY.
WELL, MAYBE BROKEN GLASS.


KRESCHHHH!!
SO. YOU'RE PRETTY *WET* ALREADY, I'M GUESSING.
NO SENSE LETTING MARKY'S SALIVA GO TO *WASTE.*
DON'T COME *NEAR* ME!
BUT JOHNNY LOVES YOU, PUCE. HE'S *ALWAYS* LOVED YOU.
HE'S PREPARED TO FORGIVE AND *FORGET.*
I *MEAN* IT, YOU FUCKER!
YOU--YOU TRY TO TOUCH ME AND I'M OUT OF THIS FUCKING *WINDOW!*
HMM. INTERESTING. I COULD PUT HER *TOGETHER* AGAIN, MORE OR LESS, BUT IT'D BE TOUGH TO GET THE *SOUL* BACK...
NO! DON'T *HURT* HER!

OKAY, JOHN, YOU'RE PISSING ME *OFF* NOW. I'M GOING TO JUMP OVER THERE AND FREEZE HER LIKE I DID YOU.
AND YOU'RE GOING TO DO YOUR *DUTY*. OR ELSE I'LL MANIFEST IN FLESH AND FUCK THE BITCH *MYSELF*.
OF COURSE, THIS WILL ALSO CHANGE THE VENUE FOR THE WHOLE *CONFERENCE*.
BUT WITH A BIT OF LUCK, NOBODY WILL *NOTICE*.
COMING THROUGH.
UHHH!
OKAY, SHE'S ALL *YOURS*, JOHN.
I'LL LOOK *AWAY*. I PROMISE.
OH JESUS, I'M *SORRY*, PUCE.
I REALLY AM.
BUT THERE'S NOTHING *LEFT* FOR ME.
NOT WITHOUT *YOU!*

GENTLEMEN.
I HATE TO *INTERRUPT*--
LUCIFER MORNINGSTAR! YOU ARE MOST WELCOME, LORD!
AND THE-- THE CHAIR BELONGS TO YOU, **BEYOND** DISPUTE.
THANKS, BUT I'M NOT STAYING. I JUST WANTED TO MAKE A POINT.
REALITY HANGS ON A KNIFE-EDGE, JUST AT THE MOMENT. AND IT IS IN ***MY*** INTEREST THAT REALITY ENDURES.
DOUBTLESS, YOU ONLY MEAN TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE ***CURRENT*** DISORDER.
BUT IN THE PROCESS YOU DEEPEN IT INTO CHAOS. CHAOS, AS I SEE IT, IS THE ***TRUE*** ENEMY.
SO I'LL BE LOCKING THE DOORS BEHIND ME.
MY APOLOGIES TO...***SOME*** OF YOU.


NINE POINT EIGHT METERS PER SECOND.
HOW RIDICULOUS IS *THAT?*
I MEAN, I COULD BE DOWN THERE SELLING SOUVENIR ***GLASS SHARDS*** BEFORE THESE TWO SACKS OF MEAT GET PAST THE MEZZANINE.
BUT I'VE BEEN FUCKING ***ENDPLAYED.***
CAUGHT BETWEEN JOHN-BOY'S SCRUPLES AND LUCIFER'S ***LACK*** OF THEM LIKE--
--LIKE A BUG IN A FUCKING BIBLE.
THAT WAS A WEIRD ***LOOK*** HE HAD ON HIS FACE.
LIKE WE WERE JUST A ***DETAIL*** HE WAS CLEARING UP IN PASSING. LIKE SOMETHING BIG WAS ABOUT TO HIT.
SHAME TO MISS IT.
The End

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